



Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature

France and England, 1050–1230

William Burgwinkle

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Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature

William Burgwinkle surveys poetry and letters, histories and literary fiction – including Grail romances – to offer a historical survey of attitudes towards same-sex love during the centuries that gave us the Plantagenet court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, courtly love, and Arthurian lore. Burgwinkle illustrates how “sodomy” becomes a problematic feature of narratives of romance and knighthood. Most texts of the period denounce sodomy and use accusations of sodomitical practice as a way of maintaining a sacrificial climate in which masculine identity is set in opposition to the stigmatized Other, for example the foreign, the feminine, and the heretical. What emerges from these readings, however, is that even the most homophobic, masculinist, and normative texts of the period demonstrate an inability or unwillingness to separate the sodomitical from the orthodox. These blurred boundaries allow readers to glimpse alternative, even homoerotic, readings.

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WILLIAM E. BURGWINKLE

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To Bruce Bruschi, for absolutely everything

altera nempe mei pars es et alter ego.

(Leoninus, “Ad amicum . . .”)

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Prologue

Que as tu dit, fole desvee? / Sez tu vers cui tu t'es donee? / Cil cuiverz
est de tel nature / qu'il n'a gaires de femmes cure; / il prise plus lo ploin
mester; / il ne velt pas biset mangier, / molt par aime char de maslon; /
il priserait mialz un garçon / que toi ne altre acoler; / o feme ne set il
joër, / ne parlerast pas a guichet; / molt aime fraise de vallet; / an ce sont
Troïen norri. / Molt par as foiblement choisi. / N'as tu oï confaitement /
il mena Dido malement? / Unques feme n'ot bien de lui, / n'en avras
tu, si com ge cui, / d'un traïtor, d'un sodomite. / Toz tens te clamera il
quite; / se il avoit alcun godel, / ce li seroit et bon et bel / quel laissasses
a ses druz faire; / s'il lo pooit par toi atraire, / nel troveroit ja si estrange /
qu'il ne feïst asez tel change, / que il feïst son bon de toi / por ce qu'il
lo sofrist de soi; / bien lo lairoyt sor toi monter, / s'il repueit sor lui
troter; / il n'aime pas poil de conin. / De cest sigle seroit tost fin, / se
tuit li home qui i sont / erent autel par tot lo mont; / ja mes feme ne
concevrait, / grant sofruite de gent seroit; / l'an ne feroit ja mes anfan, /
li siegles faudroit ainz cent anz. / Fille, molt as lo sens perdu, / quant de
tel home as fait ton dru / qui ja de toi ne avra cure / et qui si fet contre
nature, / les homes prent, les fames let, / la natural cople desfait. / Garde
nel me dïes ja mes; / ceste amistié voil que tu les, / del sodomite, del
coart . . . (Salverda de Grave, *Eneas: Roman du XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. [Paris:
Champion, 1985], ll. 8565–8611).

(What have you said, you crazy madwoman? Do you know who you've
given yourself to? That lustful tormentor is one of those, the type who
has little interest in women. He prefers those who trade in flexible rods:
he won't eat hens, but really loves the flesh of a cock. He would rather
embrace a boy than you or any other woman. He doesn't know how to

Prologue

play with women, and you wouldn't find him hanging around the hole in the gate; but he really goes for the crack of a young man. The Trojans are raised on this. You have really chosen badly. Haven't you heard how he mistreated Dido? No woman has ever got anything good from him, and neither will you, if you ask me, not from a traitor and a sodomite. He will always be ready to leave you. If he finds a pretty boy, it will seem perfectly fair to him that you should let him go off to do his courting. And if he can attract the boy by means of you, he won't think it strange at all to make an exchange: in return for letting the boy have his pleasure from you, he gets to do him. He will gladly let the boy mount you, if he in turn can ride him: he doesn't like pussy [*cuntly* or *rabbit*] fur. It would soon be the end of this life if all men in the world were like him. Never would a woman conceive; soon there would be a shortage of people; no one would ever bear children, and this world would be no more before a hundred years had passed. Daughter, you have completely lost your senses choosing such a man as your lover. He will never care about you; men who, against nature, take men and abandon women undo the natural couple. Take care that you never speak to me of him again. I urge you to give up the idea of loving this sodomite coward.)

Introduction

Sodomy appears as a topos in the very first mid-twelfth-century vernacular romances after surfacing in the previous century as a catch-all category for all that is evil and unclassifiable.¹ Infamously difficult to define, then or now, sodomy is seen as what disrupts established law, systems of classification, religious, ethnic, and gender boundaries. Prior to this medieval flowering, there is little mention of sodomy as such in post-classical texts, and when it is evoked, the author often cautions that it should not be mentioned at all, lest it lead to dangerous ideas.² The purpose of this book is therefore to examine what happens in these medieval texts – literary, historical/chronicle, or theological – when sodomy is either discussed or alluded to openly. What occurs when one speaks about what cannot be spoken of; when something vague, phantasmatic and troubling is made visible – identified, named, segregated from the body that performs and the specificities of culture? The answer is neither simple nor univocal, as sodomy becomes in the twelfth century a thematic, syntactical, rhetorical, mythical, and ethical feature of a number of diverse texts.

This book is divided into two main sections. The first deals with how sodomy was recognized, located, diagnosed, theorized, and imagined in texts from the mid-eleventh to the early thirteenth century. In brief, I will be arguing that this new category was, from the beginning, an effect of Law in the broadest sense, and that over the course of two centuries it begins to inflect that very notion. As a discursive topic, it threatens Law (religious, civic, moral, and especially imaginary) by suggesting alternatives, but it also supports it, by providing a space outside the community defined by that Law from which to establish boundaries of normalcy. It is thus a topic about which it is difficult to generalize, or to locate

in any positivist sense, a topic which has much in common with classical characterizations of feminine masculinity and homoeroticism, but which is also strongly inflected by its categorization as a Christian sin. Often held to be a predisposition which, while not defining a subject, is nonetheless tenacious and usually linked with a variety of other flaws, sodomy can serve as a lightning rod to alert us to other cultural tensions. Thus, while sodomites cannot be collapsed into the category of “homosexual” as formulated in the late nineteenth century, such individuals are usually thought to be recognizable and are often linked with any number of other characteristics, including indeterminate gender (generally male), a weak will or disposition, foreign ethnicity, social origins, or particular physical traits. Accusations and treatment of the topos differ greatly from one text to the next, depending no doubt on the intended audience, the institutions within which they were produced and disseminated, the gender of the sodomites and their accusers.

Regretfully, this book covers only material from the mid-eleventh to the thirteenth century and concentrates almost exclusively on men. This is partly because I want to establish how crucial the invention of sodomy was to the institution of a new model of heroic and highly monitored masculinity in the twelfth century, and partly because the texts themselves, even when penitential, only very rarely allude to female sodomites.

The second section presents close readings of three major texts (and sequels/companion pieces) that problematize the conception of sodomy we find in the first part by blurring, sometimes deliberately, all attempts at categorization. Even, and often especially, in texts whose purpose seems to be to criminalize or eradicate the sodomite, we find slippage between categories and speakers. It is in these texts that we can best appreciate just how difficult it is to speak of sodomy without speaking also of gender. The mere evocation of sodomy seems to stain all that surrounds it such that distinctions between the sodomitical and normal, between me and it, masculine and feminine, the lawful and unlawful, the symbolic and the imaginary, become impossible to sustain. In this sense, the book illustrates one of the key theses of queer theory, here enunciated by Glenn Burger, that “the perverse is already an integral part of the dominant and not the tragic lack embodied by a subordinate

minority”.³ These final three chapters complicate any historical understanding of sodomy in that the texts of the second section unwrite many of the pretensions of the first. The theological writings and institution of categories discussed in chapters 1 and 2 resonate, and are highlighted in, the consciously literary texts of the second half; but all that was deemed wrong, already extirpated, incompatible with heroic masculinity or sanctity in the first section, is nonetheless present, even essential, in the texts of the second.

The sense in which I use “Law” in the title is perhaps excessively broad, but necessarily so, i.e., not only as any sort of regulation by which communities establish standards and norms, but also the internalized laws of exchange, prohibition, and development by which subjectivity, gender, and status are determined. Thus Law can be a publicly disseminated set of rules, a notion of the ordered society, or a set of unexpressed assumptions, the mastery of which determines the extent to which one belongs or is excluded from full participation in a community. This latter sense of the word includes not only ethical notions and the associations made between what is wrong or evil and what is excluded, but also psychoanalytic notions of Law as that foundational prohibition which holds together and gives access to the symbolic order, makes social relations possible, instantiates the subject.

Sodomy itself ranges from being a simple description of homoerotic relations or attractions to a theological category synonymous with the sinful. Sometimes discussed by medieval authors as a universal category that can be intuited, it is just as often considered an attribute or attitude, a disposition or location (in the sense that one can be in “the occasion of sin”), which favors sinful activity. To use the linguistic and grammatical metaphors favored by many theologians, sodomy involves a deliberate twisting of meaning through the combination of incongruous elements or a faulty combination of elements which can be corrected through proper training. Important to these nuances is the fact that though it makes regular appearances in twelfth-century texts, sodomy is never treated as a topic in and of itself. Other than the expression of sentiment in personal letters, there are no overtly male–male or female–female love stories and few theological or scientific treatises that, though they set out to condemn such relations, avoid veering into irony (Peter Cantor may be the exception). Rather, sodomy is most commonly used as a textual

seasoning, the addition of which colors the way in which other major themes and especially characters are discussed and received. Whether mentioned overtly, as *sodomie*, *bougrerie* or *mestier* (prostitution), or evoked in coded terms as something menacing or foreclosed, sodomy, and in this it resembles incest, once alluded to, never fails to make itself felt. Even when authors purport to contain it, building around it cautionary prologues or hysterical condemnations, the extraordinary power of its exclusion is such that it colors the text around it. The mere acknowledgement that there is the possibility of another way, a perversion of dogma that might escape detection, is enough to overturn and subvert the reading process; and this, in turn, calls attention to the text itself, to its own defensiveness and constructedness. Once sexuality is shown to exceed so effortlessly its framework (i.e., how it has been constructed as an attribute of gender within legal and theological documents), it becomes that much more difficult to contain the text itself within its own purported linguistic, thematic, and rhetorical boundaries. Identities, plots, and arguments in general begin to look constructed, pieced together around an absence.

DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH

Not surprisingly, sodomy surfaces as a charge and category at the very moment when heterosexual love becomes an essential theme and obligatory step in the development of exemplary knighthood. As Mark Jordan has argued, sodomy is an “invention” of eleventh-century Christian theology.⁴ This does not mean that same-sex acts never occurred before that period or that new acts and identities were made possible in its wake. Rather, by sodomy he means a discursive innovation which allowed for new ways of organizing and conceptualizing behavior and individuals within groups without ever really succeeding in exerting control.⁵ As a discursive category it is still amazingly vague and all-encompassing. In Penitentials, and in later ecclesiastical legislation, it is treated as a fluid and wide-ranging sin made up of a variety of non-reproductive bodily acts which can be, and presumably were, performed by men and women – alone, in couples, in groups, and to varying degrees of sinfulness. In theological tracts, it reverts largely to a male category; and in literary texts, it surfaces almost exclusively as a charge directed at men

by women, of improper gender identity or object choice. Thus, when the Queen wishes to dissuade her daughter Lavinia from falling in love with the eponymous Trojan hero in the *Eneas* romance, she reverts to a charge of sodomy and an imaginative accounting of the tastes and behavior she associates with that category.⁶

Slippage within discussion of “unnatural acts,” between gender poles and between acts and identities, is thus very much a part of its initial conceptualization. Foucault’s utterly confused category was no less confused in the guise of sin, amongst medieval theologians, than it has been as a classification within mental health and legal circles. Whether cultures perceive same-sex eroticism as a problem and, if so, how they deal with it, is not a topic that can be considered in isolation. How such practices are performed in relation to ritual, religion, marriage, exchange, and the division of labor, is essential to any account of its cultural significance. The twelfth century was a period of rapid social and institutional change. Attempts to harness these upheavals through synthesis with existing social and intellectual formulations proliferated. Medical traditions inherited from the Greeks were re-examined and refined in the light of contemporary learning and mores, allegorical traditions inherited from Boethius and Martianus Capellus were refigured by theologians, monastic models of Christian love were transformed by new conceptions of God and friendship, *chanson de geste* heroes were refigured as heterosexual lovers and, significantly, as knights. As chivalric, monastic, penitential, and literary codes shifted more toward classification, exclusion, and rigid definitions of sexual difference, institutions both acted upon and participated in the formulation of these discourses and in their implementation as social codes. Together these codes offer evidence of a cultural shift in which some of the complex of practices and desires we know today as heterosexuality (or heterosexuality before “heterosexuality” in James Schultz’s astute formulation) were codified in tandem with new models of masculinity at the dawn of vernacular writing in Europe.⁷ These practices were then codified within the rituals and topoi of that problematic discursive and ethical category known today as courtly love. Simon Gaunt’s key observation that “a dialectic between heterosexuality and homosexuality is at the root of many medieval texts” and his further assertion that the “act of muting [this dialectic] is . . . a necessary and defining moment in the

production of dominant culture” raise a number of questions which underlie the arguments presented in the following chapters:⁸

- (1) How were subjects gendered in the twelfth century? If (Althusserian) interpellation was involved, i.e., identification and miming through subtle and unconscious coercion, how many genders resulted and how many were actually recognized? Were all subjects interpellated by one gender or by several as part of the same process? To what degree can the category of elite masculinity be considered the one and only gender of which all others are simply defective copies? What became of males whose interpellation failed, for whatever reason? Were they relegated to another, third, gender? Finally, what role does literature play in interpellating subjects and patrolling gender borders?
- (2) Why does sodomy appear as a topic of discourse when it does? What connections might be made between sodomy as a discursive formation and the rise of knighthood? Once Geoffrey of Monmouth had linked definitively chivalry and love in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, how did the heterosexual component of heroism inflect traditional notions of warrior masculinity?⁹
- (3) Why, in most of the best-known texts which include homophobic discourse and which appear to be entirely complicit with a repressive, coercive regime, can we continue to locate traces of resistance to that regime, especially in authors who have often been read as mouthpieces for repressive ideological apparatuses (Church, monastery, or court)?
- (4) What political ends might have been served either by calling someone a sodomite, by exonerating him from the charge, or by linking certain nationalities, professions, courts, or appearances with same-sex eroticism?
- (5) What was meant by a “sodomite?” Is this a class of individuals or an occasional sinner? Would any individuals actually have identified themselves as “sodomites” or recognized themselves in the image propagated by reforming moralists?
- (6) What is the relation between the sodomitical and the feminine? Are women sodomites when engaging in sodomitical acts with other women? With men? What relations can be traced between celibacy and sodomy or between heresy and sodomy?
- (7) To what degree can the unrelentingly negative picture presented by medieval clerks and clergy of non-procreative sexual practices,

including those between same-sex partners, be an effect of the fear that such acts were immensely attractive? If it was believed that the existence of these acts had to be hidden lest everyone start performing them, then does the institution of that “open secret” (we all know it goes on but can only refer to it in coded language) explain what we read today as a shadow that haunts twelfth-century literature across generic and disciplinary boundaries?

- (8) Did disciplinary and fictional texts ever serve as lures to “sodomites” within the clergy, the monasteries and convents? Did they provide the conduit through which authorities could address such individuals directly by encouraging them to identify with the portraits sketched in the texts? If so, should this double-speak and constant monitoring of the self be seen as a continuation of classical thought (Foucault’s “*souci de soi*”) or, rather, as the institution and early manifestation of what he called the “repressive hypothesis?”¹⁰
- (9) If, indeed, the twelfth century can be identified with what R. I. Moore called the birth of a persecuting society, and if a form of compulsory heterosexuality, rather than compulsory reproduction, was then being erected as an essential component of that society, what forces were behind these discursive shifts and their very real consequences?¹¹ Who had what to gain from this linking of rigid gender definition and policed sexual behavior?
- (10) Could courtly love texts, which have so often been read as the bedrock of monolithic, monologic heterosexuality, not be read instead as laboratory texts, a failed ideological experiment in imposing seamless models of (hetero)sexuality and gender?
- (11) To what extent might “sodomy” be seen as primarily discursive – more a collection of stories and stances than a collection of acts? Do these stories, as transmitted from place to place and generation to generation, change in relation to other social practices? Are these stories shaped primarily by apparatuses of power or by popular oral transmission?

KNIGHT OUT

Most of what I will be talking about in the following chapters concerns men, at least in the sense that the protagonists are male or the texts are addressed to men. It is they who are generally the butt of these

accusations of sodomy, and it is their behavior that is at stake in the ensuing trials and calls to repentance. Of course, when I say “knight” I mean young males in general: not only those inducted into special military forces, but also the sons of the nobility or the new urban rich who trained for service at courts and strove through public spectacles to make their reputations and fortunes. Knighthood as an institution probably does not pre-date the end of the eleventh century and in its first manifestation it continued many of the traditional practices of earlier warrior castes, including extensive training in horsemanship and arms, usually at a castle other than the father’s. Etienne de Fougère’s 1170 account of knighthood in the *Livre des manières* is one of the earliest known accounts of chivalry and it also contains, probably not coincidentally, a diatribe against homoerotic behavior (“whosoever is awakened by the ‘vile sin’ / is striving against nature. / He must be pursued with dogs, / throwing stones and sticks; / one should give him blows / and kill him like a cur”).¹² Etienne is decrying female same-sex acts, a rather exceptional condemnation of sodomitical acts between women in the twelfth century, but the terms in which he condemns such behavior can easily be extended to males as well.¹³ By 1170, chivalry was already thought of, at least in some quarters, as an estate or order, and had taken on an ethical cast. Knights had to be noble but also generous, and their investiture, perhaps under the influence of the holy orders of knighthood necessitated by the Crusades, took on more and more of the color of a religious mission. Yet the essential criterion remained throughout, military might. When William Marshall rose from the ranks of the minor nobility (c. 1167) to the position of regent of England (c. 1195) it was clearly by virtue of his military accomplishments and success at court.¹⁴ Romance portraits of knights never really lost sight of this essential element while progressively emphasizing the hero’s quasi-sacred mission.¹⁵ The pure, devoted, and exceptionally brave knight became the figure of elite masculinity to which all young men were to aspire. The ancient Christian moniker of *milites Christi* took on new force under the impetus of sacred knighthood, culminating by the century’s end in Robert de Boron’s fusion of monastic and chivalric ideals. Idealized figures of knighthood – Perceval, Galahad, even the *fin’amans* of troubadour poetry – served to interpellate young men into

ideological gender formations that made them, not coincidentally, more serviceable to institutional interests.

The question of what categories these knights might then be “out of” is apposite. No one claims for the twelfth century a public gay identity with its attendant political agenda, somehow identical to current notions. Nor do I want to suggest that “the closet,” that very useful psychic metaphor out of which one steps, or within which one finds oneself revealed, was identical in 1130 to the post-Sedgwick definition.¹⁶ Yet I do want to retain a heuristic notion of such hidden spaces, spaces in which sinners withheld their transgressions from confessors, for example, as a way of imagining the different subject positions that a twelfth-century monk might inhabit in relation to his interlocutors, his confessor, and the rules of his order. While it does not follow that either that space or those subject positions are entirely coterminous with a post-Freudian notion of the closet or of gay identity, these earlier formulations, especially as we find them drawn in Peter Damian’s *Liber Gomorrhianus*, are closer than many want to acknowledge. If individuals only acceded to subjectivity through interaction with the Law – ideological forces that are attempting to harness and dominate them – then it is logical to assume that the medieval clerks and monks who wrote these (largely homophobic) texts were subjects in this modern sense, even if, given the different forms that those ideological forces took, the subject positions available to them were not identical to our own.¹⁷ Secrecy, in Glenn Burger’s elegant formulation, is “the spiritual exercise by which the subject is allowed to conceive of himself as a resistance: a friction in the smooth functioning of the social order, a margin to which its far-reaching discourse does not reach.”¹⁸ It is clear that from within these spaces of non-disclosure the twelfth-century subject could speak, act, and perform, without necessarily ever being “outed,” and that these operations of secrecy and divulgence are very much at play in the texts that I will be discussing.¹⁹

How can rhetorical formulations, clichés even, act as signs of proscribed desire while also maintaining their function as cover?²⁰ To what degree could a medieval author write in double-speak with some consciousness of writing for and against, within and without, established discursive conventions? If the closet is the most ready term for the

psychic space that allows for games of hiding and revealing, the irony and camp so associated with the “gay canon” since Oscar Wilde, it is not the only heuristic we might use. As Allen Frantzen rightly observes, the term “closet” can have the effect of flattening variants from different eras, genres, genders, and disciplines, resulting in another falsified record of the past designed to please the present.²¹ I therefore fall back on John Winkler’s more malleable concept of “double-consciousness” in pre-modern authors as a way of circumventing charges of anachronism, all the while fully conscious of my own role in the construction of these texts.²² In Ed Cohen’s estimation, Winkler’s formulation has the advantage of allowing that “a marginalized poet can speak and write in the dominant discourse but subvert its monolithic truth claims by recasting them in the light of personal, subculture experience.”²³ This definition allies double-consciousness with camp while avoiding the messy closet, out of, or in, which one can only be, at any rate, until the next encounter. Double-consciousness, often in a less political form, is also a fixture of allegory, and is therefore fully consonant with medieval aesthetics.²⁴ Even so, there are many questions. Were self-conscious subcultures pervasive or were they tolerated only in major urban centers of learning, as John Boswell has argued?²⁵ To what degree did individual consciousness of sexual identity depend on such cultures?²⁶ Finally, is double-consciousness a step toward individual subjectivity or a deeper burrowing into the proscriptions of the Law? Any answer to these questions has to begin with what appears to me to be an open invitation on the part of many twelfth-century authors to read their texts actively, to revel in their word play, ambiguity, and deliberate obscurity.

Despite the massive ideological investment in the link between masculinity and knighthood, they were never successfully staged as fully overlapping spectacles. Heroic masculinity, no less than knighthood, seems to have been under construction, not fully concomitant with the evolving social, political, and linguistic discourses which stressed the sacrificial nature of the masculine. While historians of the twelfth century have often over-emphasized the discovery of the individual at the expense of the evolution of communities, most of the texts I will be examining in the second part of this book are concerned with just that: (1) how the individual fits “into” or is situated “outside of” the social group; and (2) how that fit determines perceptions of gender and sexuality. Marie

de France's *Lais*, the *Conte du graal* and its *Continuations*, and the *De planctu naturae*, owe as much to the well-documented innovations and tensions of the twelfth century (Latin vs. vernacular, individual vs. collective, aristocratic vs. royal power, dialectic vs. rhetoric, etc.) and the discourses that they engendered as they do to any notion of individual consciousness. Peter Haidu may assert (questionably) that "in the tenth and eleventh centuries, then, there were no secular subjects,"²⁷ but he also admits that "the subjectification of knight and peasant begins during the twelfth century, when a wave of disciplinary power persecutes all classes and engulfs the continent of Europe, with formation of the state as its leading edge."²⁸ Haidu claims that ecclesiastical authority acted as the substitute for the Althusserian state during this period, i.e., as the ideological apparatus through which subjectivity was instituted, and while I agree that they overlap, I see the two fields as coterminous, not identical. It is quite clear that medieval subjects could envisage an order of the Real (all that cannot be symbolized within the Law) beyond the confines of the Church and that their subjectivity was just as often formed within the gaps between secular and ecclesiastical mechanisms as within an air-tight notion of the Law, no matter how strenuously the Church claimed a universal and totalizing explanation of experience.

The various authors I will be discussing, composing at the brink of what has been called a new *episteme* of modernity, surely operated within discursive restrictions but they also resisted and rewrote these discourses through a set of double references that exposed fissures as well as links between the past and the present, institutional norms and the demands of patronage, gender and sex, and especially the socially constructed subject and the private, interior spaces in which that subjectivity can, however briefly, be cast off. This space is both more and less than a closet: it is the very gap out of which subjectivity arises in the split subject, a gap the subject tries to conceal even from himself rather than one in which he can ever successfully hide.²⁹ It is no coincidence that the texts in which masculinity and the Law that subtends it are most clearly problematized through the deployment of accusations of sodomy, are also texts that refigure this gap as an alternate space in which to situate action: the long-lost other-space of Celtic legends (Marie de France), Greek foundation myth (*Eneas*), dream narratives (*De planctu*

naturae), or the gap between the “real” terrain of Perceval’s wasteland and the apparitional status of the Fisher King’s castle in the *Conte du graal*. In this respect, twelfth-century texts are explicitly ideological in that they do exist, in Haidu’s formulation, to “cover over social self-contradiction . . . wrap[s] band aids on the abyssal wounds of psychic constitutions.”³⁰ The anachronisms of twelfth-century literature might well reflect a willed ignorance of history and an insensitivity to cultural difference, but they attest, more importantly, to an attempt to refigure the present through that past – to rewrite the present not only as demanded by patronage but also as a contested site of knowledge. Furthermore, these fissures between past and present, Latin and vernacular, masculine and feminine, sleep and waking, also provide for authorial “escape hatches” from which we, the readers, can glimpse, or imagine that we glimpse, some resistance on the part of authors to the signifying practices and disciplinary forces that patrolled them. Without going so far as to suggest a fully articulated and superhistorical individual author, I believe we can read resistance into the interstices of the competing discourses to which the author was subject, even when such resistance was unconscious or unacknowledged.

To paraphrase Gayatri Spivak, then: is there a sodomite or is he/she/it simply a brand deployed by one who controls discourse? And if there is, can he/she/it speak, or speak out? Even if we admit that the infamously hegemonic force of homophobic texts such as the *Liber Gomorrhianus* or the *De planctu naturae* might be accurate reflections of the deep and abiding moral beliefs of their authors, can we not also detect within them resistance and counter-discourse, even in the most orthodox of quasi-theological and philosophical arguments? How important is it, after all, to know whether a prolific theologian like Alain de Lille truly believed in the epistemological critique of sodomy he outlines in the *De planctu naturae*? Though it appears to be written with monologic pretensions, we can never really establish Alain’s intentions, and must therefore be ever attentive to the texts’ failure to contain slippage of meaning and to Alain’s not always subtle highlighting of those leaks. In sum, what violation is done in “queering” these texts? None at all. Most readers of what we would now consider twelfth-century canonical texts would agree that they are already very queer indeed and that it is

precisely that queerness, or alterity, that continues to attract us. First-time younger readers, increasingly untouched by any familiarity with canonical literature or traditional justifications for the study of medieval literature, are even more likely, in my experience, to remark on the queer, unexpected, and illogical elements in the texts and to express consternation over the unconvincing heterosexual narratives that they purvey – unconvincing only in the very narrow terms within which heterosexuality is constrained. One classic justification for literary criticism is that it allows us to recapture lost meaning and in some cases “render audible what was forcibly silenced,” either by contemporary mores or by subsequent criticism.³¹ In the case of twelfth-century texts, the hazy distinction between what has been lost and what might never have been very clear in the first place makes the goal of recovery of some essential meaning particularly illusory and untenable. Such, I suspect, was also the case in 1160.

When it comes to dealing with an emotionally charged issue like sodomy, medieval texts can even seem more phantasmatically familiar to us today than many post-Enlightenment texts in which the subject of dissident sexual practices is completely occluded.³² But this sense of proximity can also be illusory. What we sometimes imagine to have recovered is less easily classifiable than we would expect, not surprising given the very different ways in which subjects experienced their selves through the medium of interpretive communities. That is, there were interpretive filters or screens then operating that may go unrecognized today, including extensive use of irony.³³ We should be careful about making facile generalizations about our “gay” predecessors, but no more careful than when dealing with other issues that should be flagged for era-specific connotations (freedom, power, dreams, imagination, opposite-sex eroticism, love, etc.). Not that we need a Foucauldian blessing, but David Halperin, in response to numerous critiques about the restrictiveness of some social constructionist theories, claims that Foucault never intended caution to be interpreted as proscription. We should not feel constrained simply to map “the shifts in categories and classifications of an otherwise unchanging ‘sexuality’” or insist too strictly on “a historical distinction between pre-modern sexual acts and modern sexual identities” in the name of fidelity to Foucault:

Nothing Foucault says about the differences between two historically distant, and operationally distinct, discursive strategies for regulating and delegitimizing forms of male same-sex sexual contacts prohibits us from inquiring into the connections that pre-modern people may have made between specific sexual acts and the particular ethos, or sexual style, or sexual subjectivity, of those who performed them.³⁴

If no continuities can be perceived over the course of almost nine hundred years (1120–2004) in sexual behaviors or the ways in which sexuality was configured as a part of identity, then it must be equally impossible to claim understanding of any other of the political, social, and philosophical formulations within which sex acts were framed. In other words, to privilege sexuality as the one unfathomable formation, isolated from other equally powerful components of identity, is to perpetuate the nineteenth century's over-emphasis on sexuality as the truth of the self. Certainly some of the semiotics of medieval sexuality are now impossible to read (the role of gestures, choice of clothing, tone of voice, word choice, occupation, education, religious affiliation, cultural identity) and though we know something about attempts to regulate sexual behavior, we know next to nothing about their effectiveness. Which techniques were more productive and not just more easily recorded in writing – self-discipline (as in internal policing through examination of conscience, public or private confession, penance, monitoring of dream content, conformity to institutional standards); or legal, social, and institutional controls (self as judged by others, subject to external review but internal regulation to conform to non-negotiable community standards)? Were these controls seen primarily as customary (cultural, temporally bound through ritual and tradition), rhetorical (subject to manipulation), and/or divinely inspired? Writers trained in exploiting rhetorical figures as part of their clerical training might well have seen identities, including sexual identities, as similarly figural, to be evoked and cast off as best suited the ends of the texts they were writing or some more personal agenda. Sexuality, in other words, need not be so allied with strictly defined categories of preference and licit/illicit behavior, but could be more an effect of adherence or non-adherence to gendered standards, more performative, in effect. This does not mean that sexual preference is in itself performative, quite the opposite, but that the possibilities of acting on those preferences in the Middle Ages are numerous

and fluid. What is objected to in most of the homophobic diatribes is not sexual acts *per se* but non-adherence to the gender roles, themselves allied with disciplinary discourses, from which sexuality was thought to emerge.

Thus I want to imagine the medieval texts discussed in the following chapters as outside of the disciplinary frameworks of their own age as well as our own rigid classificatory schemes; “out” of the grip of the homo/hetero distinction. If, in the first section, I insist on history, I hope that the second section responds more to Carolyn Dinshaw’s call to transcend historical barriers through affective alliances and imagined queer communities.³⁵ To these ends, I will be taking up a wide range of questions, guided largely by Foucault’s meditations on discipline, Althusser’s notion of interpellation, and the psychoanalytic theories of Lacan and Žižek, all of which in one way or another question the boundaries between the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. And inevitably it is the construction and the conflict with Law that shapes our categories and identities, a Law that is imagined as upholding all categories, the ideology and symbolic placement from which one speaks. Even today, sodomy presents one of the most effective challenges to the *quidditas* of institutions, in that it reveals just how fragile the social structures and subject positions founded on this fantastical notion of Law really are. This challenge raises one final question: no matter how successful the attack on Law, or how overtly transgression is celebrated, can one ever truly be outside of the Law? Will it not simply morph, absorb, and regroup? In the following chapters, we will watch authors struggle with these questions, sometimes knowingly, sometimes in spite of themselves. But as they sideline the sodomite, banish and condemn him, they also, paradoxically, give him a voice.

PART I

Locating sodomy

Locating sodomy

And even the sodomites gave witness by being exterminated wherever they were in the world on that night, as Jerome says: "A light rose over them so bright that all who practiced this vice were wiped out; and Christ did this in order that no such uncleanness might be found in the nature he had assumed." For, as Augustine says, "God, seeing that a vice contrary to nature was rife in human nature, hesitated to become incarnate."¹

In the fruitful chaos of the eleventh century, a consistent church code for human behavior did not yet exist. Before Damian could condemn homosexuality, he had to define what it was and, even more importantly, to ask the central question about what it is that attracts one man to another.²

What anyone knew or did not know about sexual relations, or same-sex attraction, in 1049 or 1230 is quite impossible to ascertain, especially insofar as our only sources of information are texts which may well have been written on command, as intellectual exercises, or by authors writing in the name and persona of another. There is nothing to indicate that any of the opinions and arguments deployed in these texts were generally held in the wider culture or even that the texts themselves were widely known or disseminated. It is, nonetheless, worthwhile to consider some of the discourses on sexuality that might have been available to the scholars I will be discussing in this and the following chapter: Peter Damian (1007–72), Alain de Lille (1128–1203) or the chroniclers of early Norman England and the court of Henry II Plantagenet (1133–89). Without some discussion of historical antecedents and physiological theory, we would be discussing sodomy in a vacuum, as if practice and theory never intersected. The references to sodomy in literary texts and

chronicle occur within a climate that has been informed by earlier models of sexuality and historical antecedents. This chapter provides a rapid survey of some of this material, presented not as original historical research but in relation to the portrait of the sodomite and the condemnation, and sometimes celebration, of his behavior in the period 1149–1230.

Let me begin by saying that, unlike some scholars, I certainly do not believe that the catalogue of sexual acts open to humans expanded in the twelfth century. Nor do I believe that people were then suddenly more active sexually, or that previously unheard-of acts, once discovered, swept the land. Despite what the chroniclers say, the twelfth century cannot have been appreciably more licentious than any other; any more than the mid-nineteenth century saw an explosion of homoeroticism and masturbation. Because people talk about something they used not to talk about sometimes reflects only the fact that they now *can*. The hypothesis that the morals of the twelfth century had changed radically and that these changes demanded textual representation assumes, erroneously, that texts are unproblematic reflections of a prior social reality. Little of what we know about the textual production of the twelfth century would support such a conclusion. Resolutely anti-realistic, for the most part, authors of the mid-twelfth century constructed one of the Western world's most elaborate and influential models of an alternate fictional reality. With recourse to Celtic and classical myth (*romans d'antiquité*, Arthurian material) they built allegorical monuments, political fantasies, and erotically inflected romances that pretend to divert attention from serious matters only to refocus it onto other ideologically sensitive areas.³ Authors whose works were more directly implicated in courtly politics (chronicles, *gesta*, treatises) tempered their realism with frequent biblical references, the inclusion of folk narratives and personal commentary, and, especially, conventionalized flattery (as in Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*). Few historians today would accept as fact that King Arthur never died, that the Grail appeared to Perceval, that Henry II was history's greatest king, or that devils, dragons, and fairies routinely visited men and occasionally had sex with them. Mention sodomy in the same texts in which these fictional topoi appear, however, and critics jump to the conclusion that this "vice" had arrived at the Anglo-Norman courts (probably imported from the East or Paris), and that it had precisely the

deleterious effects imputed to it in the *Eneas*, in Orderic Vitalis, or in John of Salisbury.⁴

While the sudden appearance of sodomy in moral treatises and as a plot element in vernacular literature is not a sign of some new phenomenon or a contagion of same-sex desire, it should not, on the other hand, be read only as rhetorical flourish or political calumny. Homoerotic acts and bonds were present before, during and after the ages in which these mentions of sodomy occur.⁵ It is not a change in the shape or frequency of such acts and desires that explains the eruption of homophobic discourse in the first half of the twelfth century, it is rather that they become more representable – as Tatlock would have it, “more fashionable in 1120 and later.”⁶ Such discourse is more productively viewed as part of a larger move to gain or reassert power over the individual within textual communities, as well as in the secular realm. For who could better claim authority to speak on such matters than the Church; and the Church, at that historical moment, was seeking to broaden its realm of influence by obliging secular authorities to submit to its control on a much wider spectrum of moral and ethical questions.⁷

Thus the appearance and disappearance of sodomy as a literary topic is surely linked to a whole range of social phenomena, including the preaching of the first Crusades, papal reform, and the imposition of clerical celibacy. As Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple argued almost thirty years ago, the eleventh and twelfth centuries were key to the construction of Western notions of gender.⁸ What we today call homophobia could be viewed as just another discourse whose purpose is, and has been, to strengthen collective bonds and diminish individual control over a once-private sexual realm. This attempt to colonize every vestige of private conscience in the aim of producing a new subject who has internalized institutionalized disciplinary techniques would, of course, have served the needs of the clergy and crusading kings. Along with the heretic, the Jew, and the Welshman, among other minority communities, the sodomite became a social type, if not necessarily a psychological one.⁹ Instead of raising the issue of sodomy solely within a category of sinful sexual acts requiring contrition and penance – i.e., in terms of what is natural or unnatural, variety of positions, pleasure vs. utility, age of partner, frequency and permissible time periods, etc. – the sodomite becomes a type whose actions are explicitly social, a danger

to others as much as to himself. Sodomites pollute collective entities and can themselves represent a collective threat in that entire ethnic communities can be marked as sodomitical. The rise of what is essentially a political and social, rather than theological, category in the early twelfth century had the paradoxical effect of reifying and naturalizing sodomitical behavior. It was finally judged to be of practical necessity to acknowledge that there are men who sleep with younger men, disdain sexual relations with women, and hide this behavior from the world, so as to teach how to recognize it and avoid it. These warnings and the virulent criticism directed against such behaviors also call attention to them. They might even have had the (perhaps quite deliberate) effect of instantiating a kind of interpellation in which men began to recognize themselves and their desires in these denunciations and to define themselves in relation to such categories.

Though control, in a general sense, seems to have been behind this move into discourse, more specific reasons could account for the different manifestations of the sodomy topos during the period. Some of these might include:

- (a) the need to reform morals in a period of supposed moral decline (seen in the rise of cathedral schools, the importation of Arabic learning, the revival of Platonic and later Aristotelian thought);
- (b) the desire to demonize enemies – or foreigners who might not otherwise be recognized as sufficiently dangerous – in the hope of gaining popular support for a campaign of eradication (Muslims, Cathars, etc.);
- (c) to claim that any perceived weakening of the control of the majority over its economy, its military, its education is a result of the presence of sodomites within that enemy (as in the charges, common in twelfth-century England, that sodomy is a vice imported from France largely by intellectuals);
- (d) to register widespread dissatisfaction on the part of members of a social or ethnic group that has suffered loss of wealth, independence, or prestige by either evoking sodomy as the cause of that loss or the result of such a weakening (Gerald of Wales' claims that the Welsh lost their lands through the practice of sodomy);
- (e) to target scapegoats in times of crisis (especially during periods of contagious disease, social unrest, natural disasters);

- (f) to establish or reinforce compulsory heterosexuality;
- (g) to attract men to service in all-male arenas such as the military, the monastery, and the clergy by reassuring them of the rigid discipline and exclusionary policies designed to limit the chosen to an elite (on the basis of class, learning, sexual orientation, physical strength, or a combination of several; as in Cistercian legislation barring sodomites from the communities in the early thirteenth century);
- (h) to attack women and combat increased respect for their contributions to society by claiming that their challenge to patriarchy has resulted in degeneration of the male population (Orderic Vitalis' consistent complaint that men are being feminized and his equation of such gender ambiguity with sodomy);
- (i) to attack the secular as an enemy of the religious, especially as the Church lost direct control of the arts and learning over the course of the thirteenth century.¹⁰

In sum, there is every reason to believe that it was a complex of cultural changes that helped move sodomy to the center of a disciplinary discourse, joining a number of other categories liable to be seen as undermining the Law, rather than the sudden appearance of "contaminated" morals imported from elsewhere and propagated by an elite. Literary texts were, needless to say, just as responsible for producing these models of sodomy as they were the passive receptacles of some pre-discursive reality.

PRE-MEDIEVAL TRADITIONS

If homoeroticism became fashionable (Tatlock), tolerated (Boswell), celebrated (Stehling) and condemned, all in 1120 or thereabouts, it was not the first time that such contradictions had arisen.¹¹ In the Mediterranean classical tradition, and especially in classical reports of Celtic cultures, homoerotic relations were problematized in somewhat the same manner, often in the same contradictory terms we find in the twelfth century.¹² As for classical material from Rome and Greece, it is not clear how much homoerotic material, or even critiques of homoeroticism, were transmitted to the schools of the twelfth century. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were clearly known and exerted a good deal of influence over romance conventions, and Ralph Hexter's work on the reception of Ovid in the

early Middle Ages suggests that Ovidian tales were widely used in education and served as a subterfuge within which to discuss homoeroticism. In support of this point, albeit from a later period, the inquisitorial records of Arnaud of Verniolle's trial (1323) contain an interesting anecdote in which Arnaud, after having engaged in several acts of sodomy with one Guillaume Roux, borrows from him "a book by Ovid, whose title he did not know."¹³ He admits that after this occasion "he and Guillaume Roux committed sodomy with each other in the same room and bed . . . two or three times."¹⁴ Guibert de Nogent (1053–1124) also confesses in his *Memoirs* to having written erotic verse in imitation of Ovid: "By love of it I was doubly taken captive, being snared both by the wantonness of the sweet words I took from the poets and by those which I poured forth myself, and I was caught by the unrestrained stirring of my flesh through thinking on these things and the like."¹⁵ Plato's *Symposium*, antiquity's most famous defense of same-sex love as a superior form of love, and the *Phaedrus*, with its spiritualization of same-sex love as a figure for communion with God, were unknown to medieval scholars. Echoes of the arguments were nonetheless transmitted through Neoplatonic sources and traces can be found in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, Aelred of Rievaulx, or the epic romance, *Ami et Amile* (1200). Scholars also had at their disposal a wealth of much later material from the Carolingian court and, nearer in time, eleventh-century poetic missives between educated friends, in which same-sex friendship is both eroticized and satirized.¹⁶

Certain classical figures, Ganymede most notably, continued to carry a sodomitical valence through the twelfth century and later. His name served to connote a younger male lover and was used as a marker of same-sex love in a host of chronicles and songs.¹⁷ In the romance of *Eneas*, for example, when Lavine thinks that she has been rejected by Eneas, she recycles her mother's homophobic accusations, saying that "il voldroit deduit de garçon, / n'aime se males putains non. / Son Ganimede a avec soi, / asez li est or po de moi" (he prefers the pleasure of boys; he loves only male whores. He has his Ganymede with him and so cares nothing for me).¹⁸ Here Ganymede, the Trojan boy lover, stands in a larger sense as a synecdoche for all Trojans and their reputed taste for homoerotic acts. By extension, he is then associated with Aeneas and

his supposed progeny, the twelfth-century ruling families of England and France. Julius Caesar is another figure who was used as a metonym in the Middle Ages for men who engage in homoerotic relations. John of Salisbury, in his *Policraticus*, states: "Nichomede, King of Bythinia, was said to have made Caesar submit to his desires, Caesar being considerably younger and having been admitted by the King to unusual intimacy."¹⁹ He would later appear in Dante's *Purgatorio* with the same connotation.²⁰

Greek and Roman material on the Gauls/Celts was also available to some scholars, though medieval characterizations of Celtic sexuality might have had more to do with folk legend than learned sources. Beginning with Aristotle, who was supposed to have based his account on testimony left by Alexander's Macedonian soldiers, reports circulated that men from the north enjoyed sexual relations with other men.²¹ The most famous account of Celtic male sexual behavior is found in Diodorus Siculus' chronicle from the first century BCE:

Although their wives are comely, they have very little to do with them, but rage with lust, in outlandish fashion, for the embrace of males. It is their practice to sleep upon the ground on the hides of wild beasts, and [to tumble] take their pleasure with two partners [catamites], one on each side. And the most astonishing thing of all is that they feel no concern for their proper dignity, but prostitute to others without a qualm the flower of their bodies; nor do they consider this a disgraceful thing to do, but rather, when any one of them is thus approached and refuses the favour offered to him, this they consider an act of dishonor.²²

His contemporary Strabo reiterated this charge, perhaps basing his information on the same source: "Not only are the Celts fond of picking fights [strife], but among them it is considered no disgrace for the young men to be prodigal of their youthful charms."²³ A century later, Atheneus, clearly familiar with Diodorus' account, wrote: "Among the Barbarians, the Celts equally, although they have beautiful women, prefer boys by far. And often certain among them will have two favorites who sleep by them upon the hides of beasts."²⁴ All three comments supposedly find their source in Poseidonius' now-lost account of his travels in Gaul before the time of Caesar's conquest.

More likely to have left some vestige in medieval folk practices was the Indo-European practice of initiation ceremonies which included some sort of ritualized contact between older and younger men. There is evidence that ancient Greeks' initiation ceremonies contained a sexual element, as did those of some Germanic tribes.²⁵ Those sons of land holders who passed through the initiation successfully were inducted either into a religious society or a group of warriors. Only one son per family was allowed to marry, and it was also he who inherited the father's property. The other sons were never allowed to marry for fear of dispersing the family wealth. Consequently, their heterosexual outlets would largely have been confined to prostitutes or women of inferior classes since the behavior of the women of their own class was subject, at least in theory, to strict patriarchal controls. It is supposed that it was within these warrior groups that ritualized pederastic initiations were most prevalent. Very similar practices obtained among the Norse and Irish where fosterage ended for boys at age fourteen, after which time they were inducted into *fianna* in which sexual license and rape, hunting, fighting etc., skills necessary to the future warrior, were common.²⁶ David Greenberg theorizes that pederasty might well have been institutionalized among these peoples as well, though he speculates (problematically) that their priests were probably reluctant to report it.²⁷

Bernard Sergent discusses at some length the antecedents and vestiges of these pederastic rituals, calling them "educative, initiatory, and institutionalized."²⁸ In typically tripartite Indo-European societies, these rituals persisted through time whenever the second order, the warrior class, dominated the priestly class, as it did amongst the Gauls.²⁹ As in many non-Indo-European cultures, the young men who acceded to warrior status and the consequent privilege of the active sexual role in such rituals, typically spent one year, or perhaps slightly more, serving as passive sexual partners as they apprenticed to their master. As in documented cases from the South Pacific, such rituals served not only to make men of boys but, more importantly, to consolidate male power and privilege by feminizing potential rivals (young men who were completely dependent upon them for their social advancement), and stigmatizing the notion of the feminine.³⁰ It is not at all clear when such rituals ceased to operate in European societies or to what degree they continue to be played out during initiation ceremonies into elite

male groups. Did they disappear as a result of legislation, social change, increased visibility in the media age, or do they simply go on unnoticed in exclusively military or elite homosocial circles?³¹

Similar questions arise when dealing with literary representations of foster parentage, as in the archetypal relationships between maternal uncles and their charges, the sons of their sisters, that one finds in many twelfth-century texts and in much anthropological work.³² According to Bremmer and Graf, such matrilineal relationships were characteristic of Indo-European peoples and evidence from Vedic texts suggests that the same held true for Indo-Aryan peoples.³³ They cite the importance of such relationships among the ancient Hittites, Greeks, Romans, and Germanic tribes and the use of this motif in French medieval literature based on Celtic sources. The instructional apprenticeship at the hand of the uncle, and the initiation rites through which the young man passed on his way to warrior/knight status, might also have included some sort of ritualized sexual acts. As part of ancient Cretan rituals, for example, adolescent boys were abducted in mock-kidnapping raids. They were isolated from the community for a period of months, during which time they learned hunting and warrior skills, and acceded to the role of active, masculine sexuality, after having played the passive partner in sexual acts with their abductors. Boys who passed successfully into this second stage assumed the privileges of men of their class, attained status as warriors, and were expected to marry and reproduce as well as carry on this tradition.³⁴

This brings us to a curious passage in Peter of Abano's 1310 commentary on Pseudo-Aristotle's *Problemata*, in which he discusses how pleasure can be remembered and serve as the springboard for desire in the future. Peter takes young children as his example, and mentions that those who experience sexual pleasures before they are physiologically ready to ejaculate are most at risk of constructing their "sexuality" around those memories. Young boys, in particular, are at risk, since "their nature is soft and tender."³⁵ This leaves them susceptible to imprinted sensual impressions, stored in the memory for future referral. Adolescent boys are also at risk spiritually, according to Peter, since their memories can revive desire with great force, which in turn leads to satisfaction of the desire through repetition and finally to habit. He explains that this is so because boys at the age of puberty are "frequently subjected [supponi]

and rubbed around the anus.”³⁶ This, he theorizes, is why many societies outlaw intercourse with boys. Several questions should occur to the suspicious reader of his text and, more broadly, of his era. Though he is writing almost a century after the texts treated in this book, his reference is to the earlier *Problemata*, a text which circulated in the Latin West after its translation c. 1260 by Bartholomeus.³⁷ The authors are not referring to a new cultural practice but to a practice that is recognizable to them even in the pseudo-Aristotelian account. Why were these boys rubbed, by whom, how frequently, and with whose knowledge? Peter’s concerns hint at a larger complex of cultural anxieties about the use of adolescents for sexual satisfaction and the silence that surrounds such activities.

THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL RESPONSES

Any attempt to survey how accusations of sodomy were used in the Middle Ages must begin with those reformers within the Church who were advocating more active control of behavior. What had once been regulated indirectly, in the form of moral teachings and penance after the fact, would, in the twelfth century, become subject to active enforcement. Preemptory warnings, threats, regular examination of conscience are all part of the program. This progressive incursion of the Church into private and domestic spheres reflects increased militancy at the end of the eleventh century on a number of fronts. The intent of Rome was to confront and contravene the traditional right of civil authorities to govern certain areas of social behavior and to combat a longstanding unofficial tolerance for married clergy.³⁸ The Investiture Controversy of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries led, in turn, to resolve on the part of Church reformers to solidify control by claiming that even secular customs, such as the investiture ceremonies of knights, should fall under their jurisdiction.³⁹ The Gregorian reforms of the late eleventh century already included opposition to clerical marriage as well as simony.⁴⁰ Peter of Damian’s *Book of Gomorrah* can be seen as part of this larger “reform” movement, as can the conflicts in England at the turn of the century between Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Kings William Rufus and Henry I over the issues of lay investiture, clerical marriage, non-celibate priests, hereditary

succession, incestuous marriages, long hair on men, and, of course, sodomy.⁴¹

In 1102, Anselm ordered King William (Rufus) to hold a Council on the reformation of morals and correction of abuses in the kingdom, an order that the King refused to honor.⁴² Anselm persisted and in 1102, at his instigation, the Council of London issued its *acta*, declaring that sodomy should henceforth be confessed as a sin.⁴³ Such decrees imply political posturing as much as pressing moral concern for the welfare of individual souls. When Anselm presented to the King his objections to sodomy, incest, proper dress, etc., William is reported to have asked: "What are you getting out of this?"⁴⁴ A few years earlier, Anselm himself, when pressed to take action against sodomy, had justified his reluctance to prosecute by claiming that the practice of sodomy among the clergy was so prevalent that it defied any serious effort at reform.⁴⁵ Many, he intoned, were so accustomed to its presence and its public acceptance that they did not even realize it was wrong.⁴⁶ Despite his public refusal to ordain men accused of sodomy (or the sons of married priests) and his call to all those so inclined, already within the clergy, to desist from their actions, Anselm did not support Peter Damian's calls to mount a concentrated effort, spearheaded by Rome, to extirpate those guilty of sodomitical relations from the clergy and monastic communities.⁴⁷ This has perplexed some scholars while others have pointed out that he, himself, had probably had some experience with highly emotional same-sex friendships.⁴⁸

Marriage became the principal ground on which this battle between secular authorities and the Church hierarchy took place.⁴⁹ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a marriage that satisfied consanguinity regulations was considered valid once two requirements had been met: an exchange of vows and consummation (*copula carnalis*).⁵⁰ The presence of a priest and witnesses was therefore not technically required; two persons could marry themselves and their own oath was considered binding.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the role of the clergy grew over the same period and they began to de-emphasize sexual consummation as the ultimate sign of marriage in favor of the more essential feature: that the oath be freely given and the consent publicly declared.⁵² This strategic move had the effect of supporting the liberty of the individual to choose his/her fate, even in the face of seigniorial control, thus driving a wedge between

the individual subject, secular authorities, and family.⁵³ There were two major effects of this change. Greater attention was focused on the man as an individual, still part of, but also independent from, the group; and on women's choice, in what had heretofore been a simple exchange contracted between men.⁵⁴ The priest gradually came to dominate the marriage ceremony and it was his presence and control of discourse that was definitive, rather than the traditional formalized exchanges between families.⁵⁵ Though marriage would not officially be made a sacrament for another two hundred years, it began to be listed amongst the other six sacraments over the course of the twelfth century.⁵⁶ Further incursions into the control of marriage occurred in the form of increased attention paid to levels of consanguinity and the regulation of periods during which sexual relations could and could not be entertained.⁵⁷ Evidence of the success of these initiatives can be seen in Hugh of Saint-Victor's declaration that it is the verbal pledge that seals the marriage contract (*obligatio verborum*) and the love of the two parties that serves as the *sacramentum* of marriage. It goes without saying that these changes did not come easily.

Clerical celibacy, a second area of major concern, was imposed and reinforced at the First and Second Lateran Councils (1123, 1139) and was claimed as definitive doctrine by 1148. Thereafter the Papacy issued regular decrees warning people not to attend Masses read by married priests or priests with concubines.⁵⁸ There was considerable opposition on the part of the clergy to enforced celibacy and the riots of 1074 indicate that the opposition was also popular.⁵⁹ Once again, it was several generations before many of the Church's innovations were thoroughly accepted.⁶⁰ As late as 1194, Duby notes, a rare account of a marriage ceremony included in the *Historia comitum Ghisnensium* (History of the Counts of Guînes) includes the information that the (married) priest was accompanied to the bedside blessing of the couple by another priest and his own two sons.⁶¹ Nonetheless, over the next two centuries, many clergymen continued to live with concubines as openly as they had in the eleventh century, before the reforms. They could no longer be married, and synod lawmakers continued to insist that the official policies on celibacy be upheld, but neither effort was sufficient to end a long tradition of tolerance of clerical marriage.⁶² The unrelenting pressure to impose a code of chastity on the clergy had the

effect of erecting yet another disciplinary model of hide-and-seek, in-or-out; and, along with the attention given to marriage as a holy sacrament subject to ecclesiastical regulation, contributed indirectly to the growth of homophobic and misogynistic discourse during the same period.⁶³ As late as 1380, in John Wyclif's *De simonia*, we find a statement that seems to reflect a longstanding popular opposition to celibacy: "the law of continence," he declares, "annexed to the priesthood, that was first ordained against women, induces sodomy in all holy church."⁶⁴ John Boswell notes that there was even tension over who should be attacked first: married, heterosexual priests, or those suspected of sodomy. As evidence, he cites a Latin poem from the period in which a married cleric bemoans the actions taken against his kind while sodomites are left unpunished ("Quid pena vitas urgere gravi sodomitas?").⁶⁵

Sodomy is the third area that attracted great attention and, as we have seen, it surfaces already in the other two. In 1203 Innocent III launched a formal investigation into the practice of sodomy within the clergy in the Mâcon region of France, a harbinger of the Inquisition to come. Sodomy was already seen as an adjunct of heresy, an accusation to be disproved or punished.⁶⁶ At the Council of Lyons, in 1245, Innocent IV read to the dignitaries assembled in the cathedral a list of Emperor Frederick II's crimes, in which he included the accusation that the Emperor took Saracen lovers, both male and female. The Council was called as a forum in which to declare war on the imperial ambitions of Frederick II, reiterating Gregory VII's assertion that the Church has the divinely sanctioned right to interfere in secular and political matters. The charge of sodomy is but one among the many that were leveled, but its presence indicates that such charges operated even at the highest levels of political intrigue.

Mid-twelfth-century compilations of canon law (Gratian) and theology (Peter Lombard's *Sentences*) made virtually no mention of sodomy or "unnatural" sex, except as it pertained to the use of women in heterosexual sex.⁶⁷ But at the Lateran Council of 1179, the practice of sodomy within the clergy was raised ("that incontinence which is against nature"), along with the issue of clerical marriage. It was decreed that clerics found guilty of that sin should forfeit clerical status or be restricted to a monastery. Laymen should be punished with excommunication and be driven from their communities.⁶⁸ Both sodomites and married clergy

should be condemned and the guilty parties ordered to do penance and suffer loss of rank. The Councils of Paris (1212) and Rouen (1214) also addressed the issue of sodomy within the clergy while ignoring the question of its prevalence or the appropriate punishment amongst the laity.⁶⁹ Between the Councils of 1179 and 1215 there appeared Peter Cantor's *Verba abbreviatum*, a text intended for practical use by clergy and which proved quite popular.⁷⁰ It provided for a new generation of scholars the most complete compilation of the arguments in favor of active condemnation and persecution of sodomy.⁷¹ By the time that the Lateran Council of 1215 was called, Pope Innocent III, a former student of Peter, was vocal in his support for measures that would significantly increase the disciplinary power of the Church hierarchy over the faithful.⁷² It was accepted, for example, that secular authorities, as well as the clergy, should be allowed to impose penalties on sodomites for having had sexual relations. Such relations were now not only morally objectionable, but also criminally disrespectful of an increasingly rigid system of spiritual and civic regulations. Uniting regulation of marriage with control of non-Christians, the Council also stipulated that to avoid the possibility that a Christian might unknowingly have sexual relations with Jewish or Saracen women (or vice versa) "all these people, of either sex, and in all Christian lands, and at all times, shall easily be distinguishable from the rest of the populations by the quality of their clothes; especially since such legislation is imposed upon them also by Moses."⁷³ Civil statutes were to follow over the course of the next century, the first recorded being from Bologna.⁷⁴

By the late thirteenth century, homophobic discourse was institutionalized and sodomy had taken on mythic dimensions within the works of some theologians. Sodomites were now demons as well as sinners. In a Dominican compilation of scriptural glosses from the 1230s, Peter Cantor is credited with having told the story that at the moment of Christ's birth all those guilty of sodomy died at once, unable, as "enemies of nature," to "endure the advent of the author of nature himself" (see quotation at the head of this chapter).⁷⁵ Paul of Hungary, in his *Summa of Penance*, dedicates no more than three lines to any one of the other forms of *luxuria* (including incest) but sodomy merits three hundred lines of virulent denunciation!⁷⁶ And yet, sodomites themselves were still not subject to extensive persecution. No one was convicted of sodomy at

the French courts of Louis IX (1226–70) or Philip IV (1285–1314) and only one trial and one execution are noted during the reign of Philip V (1316–22).⁷⁷ This tolerance, or indifference, was soon to change across Europe. In 1288 the statutes of Bologna were revised once again, and this time the penalties imposed upon those convicted of sodomy moved from the simple fine imposed in 1250 to death by fire. Similar stringent measures were adopted across Portugal, in Sienna and Tortona.⁷⁸

MONASTIC TRADITIONS

The history of attitudes within monastic communities toward same-sex desire is rich and contradictory and cannot be covered here in any but the most schematic terms. As might be expected in a same-sex environment in which men spent their entire lives, often from the earliest years of childhood, affective and emotional bonds were frequently at issue, both personally and institutionally. It was, therefore, inevitable from their inception that monastic communities would have to address how affection can be expressed, in what forms, between which categories of individuals, and according to what rules. As V. A. Kolve asserts: “homoeroticism – particularly, though not exclusively, across generations, between the monks and the boys – was the form of carnal desire most dangerous within the cloister walls, as the rules, the customaries, and the penitentials all make unmistakably clear.”⁷⁹ Christianity in general had to (and has yet to) account for the celibacy of Christ, his selection of exclusively male disciples, his integration of women into his emotional circle, and the passionate, idealized expressions of male bonds found in the Old (David and Jonathan) and New Testaments (John the Evangelist and Christ).⁸⁰ David’s lament upon the death of Jonathan stands as one of the most moving models of love in the Western tradition and it continued to echo throughout the Middle Ages in the *planh*, a genre in which a poet expresses his sorrow in a musical encomium to the defunct leader or patron.⁸¹ It also served as a model for expressions of deep emotional attachment in letters exchanged by monks and in expressions of grief (e.g. Bernard of Clairvaux).⁸²

The differences between the openness with which Eastern monastic traditions dealt with such emotional bonds and the reticence of the Western tradition is striking. Amongst the desert fathers of the East it

was openly acknowledged that living in close proximity to other men might encourage physical attraction. It was considered common sense that “beautiful boys were to be kept out of the desert, for in both village and upper class life, boys could be considered sexually desirable.”⁸³ Despite this acknowledgement, same-sex desire is not considered as large a threat to holiness as kinship, and is never treated as an isolated phenomenon. It, like any number of other temptations, occasions the loss of *continentia*, or self-restraint, a flaw which goes to the core of the monastic experience in ways in which a mere sexual act might not.⁸⁴ Pachomius (290–346) and Basil (330–379) were equally frank about the dangers of sexual attraction within the monastic community, not so much for its own sake as for the havoc it could wreak on that central monastic precept: within the community all men are as one and God alone must be the focus of their collective attention. Pachomius, in his *Precepts*, counsels his brothers:

not to hitch up their garments too high and expose their legs while they washed clothes. They were not to ride on the same animal . . . for physical contact, it is implied, might occasion temptation . . . he was concerned (having allowed young boys into his monastery) that older monks might have “friendships with those of tender years.”⁸⁵

Basil is quite explicit in warning against the occasion of sin that young men represent:

If you are youthful in body or mind, fly from intimate association with comrades of your own age and run away from them as from fire. The Enemy has, indeed, set many aflame through such means and consigned them to the eternal fire, casting them down . . . on the pretext of spiritual love. . . . At meals take a seat far away from your young brother; in lying down to rest, let not your garments be neighbor to his; rather, have an elderly brother lying between you. When a young brother converses with you or is opposite you in choir, make your response with your head bowed, lest, perchance, by gazing fixedly into his face, the seed of desire be implanted in you by the wicked sower. (*An Ascetical Discourse and Exhortation*)⁸⁶

The candor with which same-sex desire is both accepted as an expected occurrence and condemned as overwhelmingly powerful and divisive is matched in the Western tradition only when dealing with

the effects of women on men, and then in largely misogynistic terms: temptation follows from the inherent wickedness of women as well as from the effect of beauty on the beholder. Same-sex attraction is never addressed so openly amongst the desert fathers of the West. When mentioned at all, it is subsumed under the broader topic of *amicitia*, and it is in that more general form that same-sex bonds are addressed as potentially dangerous to the sanctity of the individual and the community.⁸⁷ As McGuire admits: "It can hardly be accidental that almost all the *apophthegmata* or 'sayings of the fathers' in the Greek Alphabetical Collection that touch upon homosexuality are not included in the Latin Systematic Collection."⁸⁸ From that he concludes that what operates in this instance is censorship and extreme anathema rather than relaxed tolerance and in this he is probably correct.⁸⁹

This is not to say that same-sex affectivity and acts were accepted in the East: witness John Chrysostom's evident fear of all forms of sexuality and his distaste for expressions of affection between men. But there does seem to have been an open admission that same-sex attraction will inevitably occur in same-sex environments, that all men are potentially open to that temptation, and that the will is essentially powerless against its force. This much of the Eastern message did make its way into the Benedictine Rule, where one finds explicit regulations intended to ward off occasions for sexual activity.⁹⁰ Chapter 22, for example, specifies that monks must sleep clothed, one to a bed, all in one place, under supervision, with a lamp lit; and it specifically states that younger monks should not have their beds next to one another.⁹¹ The Second Council of Tours (576) ratified these regulations. We again find such sentiments and warnings reiterated in the tenth-century English *Regularis concordia*, but with particular attention paid to the relations between monks and oblates:

In the monastery moreover let neither monks nor abbot embrace or kiss, as it were, youths or children [*adolescentes uel puerulos*]; let their affection for them be spiritual, let them keep from words of flattery, and let them love the children reverently and with the greatest circumspection. Not even on the excuse of some spiritual matter shall any monk presume to take with him a young boy alone for any private purpose but, as the Rule commands, let the children always remain under the care of their master. Nor shall the master himself be allowed to be in company with a boy without a third person as witness.⁹²

As to actual practices within monasteries – how strictly such rules were enforced – not much is known. It is, however, by now acknowledged that a great flowering of Latin (at least potentially) homoerotic poetry took place in learned circles, including monasteries, during the reign of Charlemagne and that authors continued to compose texts on those models right through to the twelfth century. Are such texts a sign of the relative tolerance for homoeroticism on the part of the Church hierarchy, as John Boswell argued in 1980, or are they the signs of a renewed emphasis on friendship, in the classical and Neoplatonic senses of the word, within monastic communities and Christian communities in general, as Brian McGuire maintains? Unfortunately, the answer that readers arrive at will probably depend largely on their own experiences and willingness to entertain the idea of condoned transgression within religious communities.

If we take just one example of this outpouring of rhetoric, readily available to scholars throughout the Middle Ages, we are struck by the illusion of intense feeling that the author conveys with his vocabulary and imagery. Alcuin, abbot of the monastery of St. Martin of Tours in 796, was one of the most famous and respected scholars of his day, closely associated with the power of the Carolingian empire.⁹³ Alcuin wrote hundreds of letters, and it is in his letters to men that his mastery of the rhetoric of love and affection is most evident. Especially when writing to close friends like Arno, Bishop of Salzburg, Alcuin's language exudes a richly sensual quality meant to simulate the depth of his feelings. The following excerpt is from a letter in which Alcuin refers to Arno as his "most beloved eagle," in terms borrowed from the *Song of Songs* (*aquila carissime*):

Et utinam veniat volando aquila mea orare apud Sanctum Martinum:
ut ibi amplecter alas illius suavissimas, et teneam, quem diligit anima
mea, nec dimittam eum, donec introducam illum in domum matris
meae, et osculatur me osculo oris sui, et gaudeamus ordinata caritate
invicem.⁹⁴

[Would that my eagle come to pray at Saint Martin, so that there I
could embrace those gentlest wings and hold him whom my heart
loves nor let him go until I could bring him into the house of my
mother and he kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, and we rejoice
together in ordered charity.]

Now, the eagle would surely have signified to any learned Christian the figure of John the Evangelist (“the disciple Christ loves”) but also, of course, Ovid’s version of the tale of Ganymede, in which Jove, disguised as an eagle, carries away the beautiful Trojan boy for service at table and in bed. Most learned readers would have recognized the evocation of both of these figures, and perhaps others. In another letter to Arno, Alcuin expressed the wish that he might be taken up by the hair like the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk and delivered to his friend, another indirect evocation of Ganymede’s fate. Once there, he declares:

et quam compressis labris non solum oculos aurea et os, sed etiam manuum vel pedum singulos digitorum articulos, non semel, sed multoties oscularer.⁹⁵

[With my lips pressed not only on your eyes and ears and mouth, but also on each of your fingers and toes, I would kiss them not once but many times.]

Whether Alcuin had had, or wanted to have, a sexual relationship with Arno is not really at issue in these letters (Alcuin, in fact, rarely saw Arno and their relationship is largely epistolary – not, of course, necessarily a proof of lack of sexual involvement). Alcuin shows no evident interest in sexual matters: sexual imagery is simply an inevitable element of the vocabulary of affection and is appropriately directed to the men he loves. On the other hand, he cannot be using such imagery entirely innocently. He surely knows from his studies the contexts within which it is generally used, but refuses to limit his vocabulary and imagery to any one register, human or divine, sensual or spiritual. I am afraid Heinrich Fichtenau misses the point entirely when he complains that Alcuin “mixed up varieties of love and failed to distinguish between human and divine loves.”⁹⁶ It would appear that that was precisely his intention.

The poetry and letters of the twelfth-century monk, Baudri of Bourgueil, offer strong proof that the rhetoric of the Carolingian period was known and still imitated three hundred years later. Baudri was the Abbot of Bourgueil from 1107 until his death in 1130. When historians claim that the homophobia expressed in this period was a reaction to widespread homoerotic practices in monasteries, Baudri is often cited, both for the openly homoerotic nature of some of his verse and for the

disapproval of sodomitical acts that he evinces in other writings. That he would seem to contradict himself in such a manner is not at all surprising or, for that matter, a sign that his testimony cannot be trusted and should be dismissed out of hand. What looks like a contradiction at the heart of his work is, in fact, the most telling sign that he is a man of his age, capable of mastering several registers of language, each appropriate to a different occasion. Baudri can speak as a theologian, as a proselytizer, and as a friend. All intersect, but no one of them can or should be taken as the faithful transcription of his private sentiments.⁹⁷

The full glorification of friendship as an accepted part of monastic or knightly experience and the attempt to codify it in a theological sense are two sometimes contrary directions characteristic of twelfth-century writing. As Boswell noted, the optimism and open-mindedness that inspired those writers was short-lived.⁹⁸ This is not to say that friendship ceased to be important, an outlandish claim that certainly would not bear up under examination. Chivalric friendships continue to play a major role in romance into and well beyond the thirteenth century, even if they rarely attain the emotional force of male bonds in the *chansons de geste*.⁹⁹ This is not surprising. Homosocial bonds played a major role throughout the Middle Ages in the transfer of power and prestige between men at court, in the military, and in routine marriage transactions; and these bonds were often most potently expressed in the passionate rhetoric of poems and letters addressed to single men and monastic communities.¹⁰⁰ In literary texts, over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the representation of such friendships, even when they are meant to function as negative exempla, still seem redolent of earlier erotic colorings.

Male friendships are explicitly censured when they appear not to respect the monastic ideal of bridled, chaste, non-affective, communal bonds, or when they appear to have interfered with the process of interpellation into heterosexuality, a process in which romance plays an important part. The twelfth-century Neoplatonic conception of monastic friendship, that of Aelred of Rievaulx, in which personal perfection, sanctity, and oneness with God are attained through the mediation of the beloved friend, disappears definitively from monastic discourse in the thirteenth century and is replaced with legalistic statutes prescribing punishment against same-sex affection.¹⁰¹ In 1195, for example, we

find a provision in the Cistercian statutes on how to deal with monks caught *in manifesto contagio carnis*, i.e., any type of sexual activity. By the 1220s sodomy is listed as a crime and it is recommended that the guilty party be expelled from the order, never to be readmitted. Though statutes dealing with sex in general were added in 1202, 1237, and 1252, the statute dealing specifically with sodomy did not appear until 1237 or later.¹⁰² Convents were not immune either. In 1212 the Council of Paris extended the provision of the Benedictine Rule that a lamp burn all night in dormitories to all convents, and also forbade nuns from sharing a bed.¹⁰³

Sex is not, of course, the real culprit – it acts as the smoke and attracts the attention, but the fire is fed not on sexual acts but on more fundamental reorganizations in the ways that power was exerted within the monasteries, among orders, and in the Church's ever-increasing need to centralize and codify. Brian McGuire lays the blame on a problem much broader than "fear of homosexuality":

a loss of confidence in the possibility that a community's rich interior life could provide a sheltered and fertile ground for friendship . . . new social realities challenged friendship: the growth of formalized centers of learning, the establishment in them of rules and statutes, an end to the long period of monastic expansion, a proliferation of disputes over monastic privileges and property, an insistence on discipline in the "old orders," Benedictines and Cistercians. . . . Such changes in the mental, social and spiritual climate made it more difficult for men in the church to take the risk of showing frankness and honesty with each other.¹⁰⁴

The attacks of John of Salisbury, Walter Map, and Orderic Vitalis on sodomy and corruption among the aristocracy, discussed in chapter 2, are signs of these changes. The lack of confidence in one's fellow man seems to have been an inevitable outcome of the Church's efforts to regulate private behavior through internalized self-disciplinary measures, abandoning in the process traditional reliance on a sense of responsibility to the group and public atonement. The gradual turn from public to private confession over the course of the twelfth century hastened the transformation of a shame culture (status determined collectively) to a guilt culture (regulation of the self by the self); and official campaigns

against demonized "Others" (heretics, Jews, pagans), sanctioned in high places, had repercussions in the *mentalités* even of the smallest community.

PHYSIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF
GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Physiological theory, inherited largely from antiquity and indirectly from Arabic sources, was available to scholars by the thirteenth century in the form of Latin treatises used by medical students and practitioners. In such texts it is taken for granted that the male body is superior to the female, that the female body is an imperfect creation, an inferior copy of use value only (i.e., for reproduction). As Thomas Aquinas states:

With respect to her particular nature, woman is somewhat deficient and misbegotten. For the active power in the male seed tends to produce a perfect male like itself while when a female is produced it is because of a weakness of active power or some material indisposition or some external change such as a moist south wind, as appears in the *Generation of Animals* [Aristotle].¹⁰⁵

In the higher, unchanging, metaphysical realms of creation (as depicted in Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia* or Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudianus*), there would have been no need for sexual differentiation or menstruation among humans, as all beings would revert, as they approached paradise, to the one, original model of perfection, the male form.¹⁰⁶ Pursuant to the biases of such a position, mortal coitus could be theorized and justified largely as a means of maintaining male health and strength through the ejaculation of seed. Woman's body, in this (Aristotelian) light, was seen as the passive receptacle of this male seed; but the womb, often seen as equivalent to the inverted penis, was also responsible for women's insatiable sexual appetite, a commonplace of misogyny.¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, the Old Testament, and Augustine all presented models in which only the male produces seeds, whereas Hippocrates and Galen had argued that women also produced seed (though of inferior value to men's) through the activation of physical pleasure.¹⁰⁸ This latter school of thought also recommended regular intercourse for both sexes as a way of maintaining good health and balance between the humors. The

two-seed doctrine, in which both parents contributed to the form and matter of the fetus, was generally preferred over Aristotle's one-seed theory by the thirteenth century, and those who accepted the validity of this theory had also to admit to some degree of reciprocity between the two sexes' contributions and needs (both desires and pleasure).¹⁰⁹ Aristotle's theory of form and matter was otherwise largely accepted, even if not recognized as Aristotelian. According to this theory, it is the male who confers "form" on female "matter." From the acceptance of this concept come the myriad metaphors for sexual reproduction found throughout the Middle Ages: woman as the passive tablet on which the male phallus inscribes, the fallow field in which the male phallus plows, etc.

Gender and gendered characteristics were thought to be determined largely by placement of the fetus in the womb. As the theory goes, the uterus is divided into seven cubicles, three on each side and one in the center. Since males are hotter and females cooler, the left side of the uterus, the cooler side, houses the female fetus. The male fetus takes up residence on the right side while the occupant of the center cubicle becomes a hermaphrodite. The force of the female sperm complicates further this paradigm. If more of the female sperm settles on the right side of the womb the result, quite logically, is a manly woman (or virago). Conversely, if the female seed settles on the left side of the womb but the male seed still outnumbers it, the result is an effeminate man. Only when equal amounts of seeds from both partners settle in the middle chamber would the result be a hermaphrodite. Thus we have a tempered essentialist paradigm in which both placement and seed quantity determine the sex and gender of the fetus. This model implies that there are at least five naturally occurring gender permutations available: women, manly women, men, feminine men, and hermaphrodites, though it is not at all clear what the gender characteristics of the sexual category of hermaphrodite might entail.¹¹⁰ Joan Cadden notes that despite this theory, and the tolerant attitudes it might seem to encourage, medieval societies generally contained experience and expression within a very rigid binary of masculine and feminine, with little or no cross-over allowed. Limited, therefore, in how it could be applied, this theory nonetheless allowed within nature for ambiguously gendered individuals who either reject marriage outright (as in saints of both sexes, or some knights), express and perhaps feel no sexual desire (Guigemar or

Narcissus in chapter 5), or find their primary emotional bonds with members of the same sex.¹¹¹

Cadden's invaluable study also notes Aristotelian dichotomies between males and females across species: males are larger, stronger, more active, easily roused to anger, generous, studious, and controlled by virtue; while females are smaller, more prone to tears, envy, lying, and easier to train. Feminine men are thus "tender-hearted, envious, easily giving in to passions, intolerant of physical work, bitter, deceitful and timid." They have less body hair, straight eyebrows, hairlines high on the neck and "[unspecified] female behaviors."¹¹² Cross-gendering was a crucial metaphor in alchemy as well. The Philosopher's Stone, the symbol of the union of opposites, is sometimes represented as a hermaphrodite or Hermetic androgyne, or even as a father giving birth to a son. The romance of *Aucassin et Nicolette* (1200) offers a delightful depiction of some of these inversions: the active, generous, physical, virtuous, and rational woman, Nicolette, is counterbalanced by the tender, passionate, indolent, timid and weepy Aucassin, her male lover. Their visit to the land of Torelore includes a more explicit staging of these gendered inversions. In that kingdom, as part of a general overturning of norms, women act as warriors, men give birth to children, physical harm of any kind is antithetical to war, etc. This certainly does not reflect any generalized tolerance of gender fluidity; probably quite the opposite, since the binaries are still, in fact, reinforced, though inverted. It does indicate, however, that even outside of learned medical and philosophical communities such models were in circulation.

Even what we might call sexual orientation received some attention in medical commentaries. Greek medicine, transmitted back to the West through the Arabs, often explained in physiological terms conditions which, since the nineteenth century, have been seen in the West as psychologically based. Avicenna (980–1037), modifying, in his *Liber canonis*, the position of Aristotle, states that there are men "who are accustomed to having other men throw themselves on them." He says that it is pointless to seek a cure for such men (he calls them *al-liwat* or, in Latin transliteration: *halubuathi*, *halubnathi*, or *alguagi*) since "the origin of their disease is meditative, not natural."¹¹³ This dichotomy is interesting. "Meditative" is later glossed by Western commentators as "sodomite/evil/lustful," effects of a defective will, and paired in a binary

construction with the “natural” or physiological. Paul of Hungary (writing between 1219 and 1221), sticking closer to the “natural/physiological” explanation, claims that sodomites have a disordered reproductive drive because of liver dysfunction. Since the liver was thought to be the principal organ through which generative powers were filtered, sodomites naturally showed signs of susceptibility in this area and therefore showed inevitable signs of enervation, a condition associated with women.¹¹⁴

Cadden’s studies of Peter of Abano’s *Commentary on the Pseudo-Aristotelian Problems* show how Peter bridged the abyss between these two poles by suggesting that there are two reasons why men are susceptible to anal stimulation: “in some men, the pores and passages and the resultant susceptibility to anal stimulation occur naturally, in the sense that they are innate; in others, the inclination is instilled by habitual practices that create what is a kind of acquired nature . . .” In Cadden’s formulation: “He (Peter) distinguishes two types – not the traditional active and passive, but rather the anatomical and psychological – but then he dismantles or at least blurs the distinction by reducing habit to nature.”¹¹⁵ Peter’s commentary is hardly a neutral acceptance of such types or behaviors, but it is, depending upon one’s assessment of his intentions, a wily performance that walks a narrow line between a defense of “natural” behavior and a condemnation of the deformed will.¹¹⁶ Where Avicenna recommended “sadness, hunger, vigils, imprisonment, beating” as remedies for what he understood as a physiological itch that is otherwise only relieved through anal intercourse, Peter recommended a special diet and medicine for what he also calls a disorder.¹¹⁷

Albertus Magnus’ thinking was along the same lines: he prescribed packing an intriguing topical application made in part from the fur of a hyena on the anus of “passive” males.¹¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, while condemning sodomy as the result of a defective will, still suggests that external stimuli play their part. Following Aristotle’s association of sodomy with a disposition toward war and fighting, Thomas suggests that sodomitical desire can be exacerbated by too much horseback riding!¹¹⁹ These theories, however farfetched, still seem audacious today in that they dare to transfer the responsibility for desire from the weak will of the sinner to his/her imperfect body. This does not, however,

mean that the sinner is actually acquitted. Acting to satisfy that itch, however bodily it might be, would no doubt still be seen as sinful within theological discourse. So would refusing to seek out the efficacious treatment, as this would be the equivalent of perpetuating, deliberately, an occasion of sin. Though still quite far from announcing a “homosexual identity,” these theories represent a step, however tentative, toward normalization through a medical discourse.¹²⁰

Thus, for Cadden, these medical treatments “were clearly not aimed at changing the patient’s essence but rather at changing his behavior.”¹²¹ It is tempting still to imagine how the treatment of a “feminine male” who indulged in anal intercourse might have differed from that administered to a “masculine-appearing male” (i.e. strong, not emotional, unremarkable hairline) who felt this same itch. To what degree was it expected that the treatment itself might also remedy gender-specific traits which could theoretically be explained away as due to placement and seed quantities in the womb?¹²² If this medicalized form of gender theory was as deterministic as astrology,¹²³ and the similarities are actually quite striking, then we must wonder how much the gendered behavior of the “patient” was also seen as subject to modification, either as a result of a topical medical treatment that relieved inappropriate sexual desires, or as an effect of a diet that might conceivably reconfigure the composition of humors with which he was born.¹²⁴

Peter’s explanation for deviant sexuality had antecedents in Ptolemy’s second-century astrological speculations, the *Tetrabiblos*. In that work, Ptolemy attributes a number of personality traits to groups of men depending upon the climatic and astrological conditions to which they are subject. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from Ptolemy’s speculations is that a whole range of behaviors and desires are natural because men are the product of natural geographical and astrological influences. Most noteworthy for our purposes are his comments on those who are born and raised under the westernmost zone of Jupiter and Mars. Because:

the first zones of this area have a masculine character and the last a feminine character, men’s passion with regard to women is weakened, making them disdainful of the pleasure of love-making and more inclined and desirous of masculine partners. But since this behavior

is not looked upon as shameful, nor this disposition perverse, it does not make them soft and lascivious. They retain a virile spirit, a lively sense of community; they are loyal, generous and prone to close family ties.¹²⁵

Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we will see repeatedly, authors having recourse to this same dichotomy of soft/wanton/feminine men and their active/industrious/loyal and virile masculine counterparts. Peter of Abano might have taken the lead from Ptolemy and Arabic scholars in adducing natural causes for natural behavior but his example would remain an enlightened exception. Though homoerotic relations continued to be perceived everywhere, elusive and deceptive, throughout the Middle Ages, the vast majority of voices we will examine in the next chapter seek to corral the inclinations that lead to such behavior and publicly stigmatize its practitioners. Only thus can they instantiate an arena purified of desire which might accommodate, though never without difficulty, both the celibate love of the religious man or woman for his male savior, and the noble and selfless love of Christian marriage and chivalric devotion.

Imagining sodomy

It is thus paradoxically through the study of the text's misrepresentation of reality that we can seize its ideological dimension as the "indispensable mapping fantasy or narrative by which the individual subject invents a 'lived' relationship with collective systems," as Jameson put it. In this way we can construct the text as a map of its own ideological and psychological investments, its fears, hopes and desires. The fact that the map never coincides with the terrain does not mean that there never was a terrain at all.¹

Michael Nerlich has called the knight-errant, an emblematic figure of the twelfth century, the most important contribution made by that century to the legacy of Europe. As the forerunner of the merchant/adventurer, the knight seeks revelation and reward at the end of his journey; then, through recounting his travels, seeks to shore up his own prestige.² This knight/adventurer nonetheless posed several basic ideological problems to a society which valued strong male bonds and a spirit of collective responsibility. The many studies on the individual in the literature of the period emphasize the gradual emergence of the knight as a super-star, the sinner as directly answerable to God rather than the community, and the lady as having a voice as well as a place within patriarchal exchange. All of these changes proved challenging to conventional mores and resentment against them surfaces repeatedly in texts produced at the French and Anglo-Norman courts. Sodomy is explicitly associated with challenges to Law and begins to feature prominently in litanies of fault-finding. As in most persecution narratives, the charge is aligned with things new or imported: pagan religions and heresy, newly acquired learning and the growth of intellectual centers, new sources of wealth and a more influential urban class, the corrupt

counselors of political figures.³ One might gain in prestige, knowledge, and wealth by traveling beyond the confines of a community but the chroniclers are mostly eager to reassert the primacy of the known.

The new centers of learning, for example, and particularly Paris, were stigmatized as being nothing more than training grounds for sodomites. Henri de Marcy, Abbot of Clairvaux (1176–79), announced that ancient Sodom had been reborn from its ashes in the school towns of his century.⁴ His contemporary, Peter of Celle, Abbot of Saint-Rémi de Reims (1162–81), called Paris, in a letter to his friend, John of Salisbury, the site: “where decadence reigns, there miserably the soul becomes a slave and is afflicted. O Paris, how well suited you are for capturing and deceiving souls!”⁵ Marginal graffiti, collected from twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts, indicate something of an obsession with the topic:

Let Chartres and Sens be destroyed, where Adonis prostitutes himself according to the law of the whorehouse: there are acts of sodomy there. Infected with the same vice, the noble and distinguished city of Paris is happy to be married to a soft and delicate master. But more than all these monstrous towns, you, Orleans, are ruined by your reputation for this sin.

Now Chartres and Paris make themselves filthy continually with Sodom’s vice, and in Sens Paris becomes Io.

The men of Orleans are the best, if you like the custom of men who sleep with boys.⁶

This association of Paris and the school towns with decadence continues through the thirteenth century with Jacques de Vitry (c. 1165–1240) reporting on the debauchery of students, and culminates in a 1292 scandal that led to the expulsion of several scholars from the University of Paris on charges of sodomy.⁷ The fear of contamination by things foreign and of learning as the means by which the community is threatened surfaces repeatedly in such scribblings. A more generalized anxiety about sexuality was provoked by the musical innovations at the cathedral of Notre Dame. As Bruce Holsinger has shown, condemnations of musical harmony as eroticized and touched by the sodomitic, in the writings of John of Salisbury, but also Robert de Courson and Gilles de Corbeil, allow us to “begin reconstructing a distinctly medieval homoerotics of

polyphonic performance and reception, a homoerotics centered around the cathedral of Notre Dame . . . ”⁸

The English chroniclers are particularly insistent on the dangers represented by these continental mores. St. Anselm (1033–1109) and Henry of Huntingdon (1120) make it quite clear that sodomy has been imported into England, either from the Middle East, or, more directly, from France.⁹ Walter of Châtillon says in one of his satires that all the young noblemen become sodomites as they pursue their medical studies in France: “When they are young, sons of nobility, / Are sent to France to become scholars; / Corrupters of youth recruit them with coaxing or cash / And thus they bring obscene habits back to Artaxata.”¹⁰ What most bothers the Benedictine historian, William of Malmesbury, and Orderic[us] Vitalis, a monk from Saint-Evroul in Normandy (1075–1141), is the taint of femininity they detect in those who have associated with the French. As Claire Fennell put it: “for Ordericus human beings are not divided into two genders, each with its own code of dress and behavior . . . there is one gender, and one non-gender, which he admires when it manages to emulate the real one.”¹¹ This assimilation of femininity with Otherness and of masculinity as a preserve untainted by contact with the feminine is part of a larger pattern that insistently links femininity with something foreign to the enclave of masculine purity, something which also threatens and against which the Law is erected. Misogyny, as has often been remarked, is almost invariably the support of homophobia.¹²

Many of these attacks on English youth corrupted by contact with the foreign “Other” were directed against the young men of the court of William Rufus (1087–1100), a full generation after his demise. William of Malmesbury (1095–1143), writing in 1125 or thereabouts, equates the court fashions of William’s court with the effeminacy of the men who frequented it: “It was in those days that the fashion for flowing locks, luxurious clothes, the wearing of shoes with curved points was launched: to rival women in soft living, to mince with foppish gestures and to flaunt naked flesh, was the example set to young men.”¹³ Frank Barlow, summarizing William’s critique, says that “a band of effeminates and a flock of harlots [*ganae*] followed the court, so that the court of the King of England was more a brothel of catamites than a house of majesty.”¹⁴ Orderic Vitalis, probably the most vocal critic of William Rufus and his

men, follows William of Malmesbury's impetus in blurring gender and sexuality, implying that effeminacy is synonymous with the non-natural. Writing somewhere around 1130, when William Rufus had already been dead for thirty years, he acknowledges the King's prowess as a warrior but deplors his indifference to the Church and his moral depravity. It is the physical manifestations of what he interprets as moral decay under William's rule that most offend him:

In times such as these, wanton seduction walked abroad with impunity, and sodomitic lust foully corrupted effeminates destined to the fires of Hell, adultery openly defiled the marriage bed. . . . In those days effeminates ruled the world, unrestrainedly pursued their revels, and foul catamites, doomed to burn in Hell, subjected themselves to the filth of sodomy . . . they ridiculed the exhortations of priests, and persisted in their barbarous behavior and dress.¹⁵

Orderic, like William of Malmesbury, also objects to these fashions, particularly the long trains and wide sleeves which prevent one from doing anything useful or important, the "serpent's tails" or curling extremities added to shoes, and the long and carefully coiffed hair.¹⁶ Despite his association of all this finery with effeminacy, he notes curiously that such extravagance actually helps courtiers to woo women, presumably assuming that the more a man is like a woman, the more she will like him.¹⁷ Thus a taste for sodomy is a manifestation of artifice, only one affectation among many which are thought to demasculinize and denaturalize.

William Rufus himself is said by several chroniclers to have been an open sodomite and in the chroniclers' characterizations we find invaluable evidence of just how such a category was imagined. Henry of Huntingdon sets up the binary opposition, God/William: "In sum, whatever was displeasing to God and to those who loved God, was pleasing to this King and to those who loved the King. They did not practice 'luxuriae' [sexual sins] in secret, but shamelessly and ostentatiously."¹⁸ Reports of his wild sex life and tolerance of sodomy circulated even during his reign, but it was after his death, in the reign of his brother, Henry I, that he was censured repeatedly in the chronicles. According to Eadmer of Canterbury, Anselm, while still the Abbot of Bec, felt compelled in 1092 to address his concerns for the King's reputation

to William himself.¹⁹ His appeal was unsuccessful. Two years later, in 1094, Anselm berated the assembled court during Ash Wednesday services, forcing many of the courtiers to have their hair cut before receiving the holy ashes. Anselm then made another private appeal to the King to join forces with the Church against sodomy, the spread of which, he claimed, risked turning the whole land into the biblical city of the plain.²⁰ Again, William refused to help, using the interesting argument that questions pertaining to sodomy, dress, hairstyles, incestuous marriages and the like were under the purview of the King, not the Church. Hugh of Flavigny (*b.* 1065), an abbot who had come to William's court in 1096, reported that the King was an impressive man physically but one addicted to worldliness and carnal pleasures. In one of the anecdotes of his stay at the royal court, he tells of a royal chaplain who confessed publicly that he had been impregnated by a man and was carrying his child. Needless to say, the unfortunate chaplain died of the internal growth that was devouring him and was not allowed burial in sacred ground. This sad tale of misunderstanding is noteworthy in that it supports the chroniclers' assertions that sodomy was openly discussed at the royal court, even if in the most derogatory of terms.²¹

Orderic Vitalis, in addition to the critiques of the King offered above, was without pity when reporting on William Rufus's death. Struck by an arrow, apparently as an accident, during a hunting expedition (Orderic says he was in the company of his "parasites," usually glossed as male prostitutes), William was mourned only by the "mercenary soldiers and prostitutes, both male and female, who had lost their paymaster."²² Wace (*c.* 1100–?1170) recounts in his *Roman de Rou*, a history of the dukes of Normandy, that during one of William Rufus's army expeditions from Alençon to Le Mans, the King came upon the two rivers, Cul and Con (ass and cunt), and insisted upon entering both of them.²³ The fact that William never married and seems never to have fathered any children leads historians to take these accounts more seriously than they might otherwise.²⁴ Were these criticisms to be dismissed as simple political slander, as is sometimes asserted, one would have to answer satisfactorily why they are directed only at certain of the stigmatized kings and not others. There is, after all, no such accusation against his father, William the Conqueror, or his brother, Henry I. His other brother, Robert, Duke of Normandy, is also castigated by the same chroniclers for his many

excesses, some of them sexual, but it is made quite clear that his sins are committed with women. At any rate, what concerns us is not whether William engaged in sexual acts with men but rather what made the charge of sodomy so readily available, comprehensible, believable, and effective in 1130.

John Boswell was not at all convinced that William Rufus was “gay,” claiming that Orderic is the only chronicler to specify his sin as sodomy rather than just general sexual excess.²⁵ Furthermore, he claimed that Orderic was “obsessed with homosexuality and imputed it to most prominent Normans.”²⁶ In support of this contention, he cites Orderic’s rather hysterical claims that when the son of William Rufus’s brother, the future King Henry I, William Atheling (or “Audelin”), drowned in 1120, along with most of those aboard his ship, *Blanche-Nef*, it was a sign of God’s hatred of lasciviousness. Orderic asserts that the ship went down because it was loaded with sodomites and fashionable courtiers, using the same language that he had used to denounce the court of William Rufus at his death twenty years earlier.²⁷ We could dismiss this charge as just a sign that Orderic was vindictive, or a political enemy, but we should not overlook the possibility that most of the prominent Normans who had been to the royal court probably did seem to him effeminate. Though Orderic was born near Shrewsbury, in England, he had been sent as a child to the monastery of Saint-Evroul, in Normandy, where he spent the rest of his life. He was a middle-aged monk when he wrote these attacks and he may have found that any worldly affectation smacked of artifice and lasciviousness, traits he associated exclusively with the vanity of women and transgression against the Law.

Regardless, it again demonstrates that the charge of sodomy was quick to spring to mind and quick to adhere. Just fifty years earlier it might have been enough just to call the same types excessively proud, vain, and impious. Though it has been said that most of the subsequent chroniclers who vilified William did so largely because they took their information from Orderic, the chorus of condemnation of his court in the later years of the reign of Henry I (1100–1135) indicates that sodomy was by then a multivalent charge that covered a wide range of excesses. Though still associated principally with the four same-sex acts outlined by Peter Damian in his *Liber Gomorrhianus*, it had moved, as a concept, beyond the all-male environments which provided the context for much

of these accounts.²⁸ By 1130 it seems to have become applicable to a larger pool of individuals and to cover a much wider range of behaviors and excesses. Though it does not yet seem to have acquired the force of today's ubiquitous "faggot," the charge of sodomy must have carried some of its regulative force.

In the case of William Rufus, but even more so over the course of the century, the sodomite is associated with things "new" and modern: sometimes with chivalry, the code of ethics adopted by independent warriors committed to service outside of traditional military outlets, and with the rise of official patronage of the vernacular arts. William Rufus's frequent association with fashion, changes in mores, hostility to the Church, *jongleurs* and other marginal types (harlots, parasites, poets, musicians of one kind or another) immediately increased the likelihood that such charges would be deployed. The denunciations do not, however, seem to detract from his warrior status. His biographer, Frank Barlow, notes that even if it were true that William's sexual tastes ran to men, it would probably have had little effect on his prestige in military circles: "It was common enough and fitted easily into the life of the camp and, in the field, into the comradeship of soldiers-in-arms."²⁹ The arena in which he is most highly criticized then is his choice of courtiers and his refusal to capitulate to the Church in the wake of the Gregorian reforms. During the thirteenth century, when secular penalties for sodomy were becoming increasingly harsh, politically motivated charges of sodomy were still very effective as propaganda, as the prosecution of the Templars forcefully demonstrated.³⁰ This does not mean that the charges ceased to have anything to do with sexually irregular behavior. It is simply that the same sexual behavior that might once have occasioned only private tittering or the attention of confessors, was becoming an open secret, a discursive category with its own vocabulary, list of charges, applicable biblical citations, and penalties. Whether or not the individual against whom the charge of sodomite was directed actually fitted the bill, the deployment of the concept itself had consequences. It both enlightened the community as to the existence of such behavior and took on a force of its own as disciplinary tool. It would be useful now to look at some specific cases of clerical and monastic voices in order to trace the conflicted portrait of sodomy we find in their works; then, finally, to look at the emblematic example of Richard Lionheart.

According to Peter Damian, the wave of sodomites afflicting the clergy in the eleventh century was a new phenomenon. He argues in his *Liber Gomorrhianus* (1049) that the early Church Fathers (Jerome, Augustine) were able to extirpate such behavior in their own day through the force of their condemnations, all the while fretting that those very condemnations might actually have contributed centuries later to the spread of sodomy, simply by alerting men to the existence of such practices. The only proof he produces that sodomitical acts posed little problem during those intervening centuries is that he knows of no extant condemnations from that time. Had this behavior been perceived to be a problem, he says, we would “no doubt . . . today . . . possess many lengthy volumes which they wrote against it.”³¹ This is a risky and somewhat tautological argument: firstly because Peter has had to admit that the offending behavior existed almost a millennium earlier, a sign perhaps of its ineradicable or even natural and inevitable presence. Then, by equating the “problem” with the written denunciations, he unwittingly suggests that the behavior itself might indeed have persisted in that interim but that it had not been deemed problematic enough to warrant written condemnations. This perverse reading is actually supported by his later observation that the sodomite is always already there, ready to pounce like the devil within the individual psyche. This again suggests that the sodomite is always present and has always been; that he can always survive by “passing,” avoiding detection.

Peter therefore argues that the sodomite is doubly dangerous and must be cast out as a scapegoat, loaded with the unspoken guilt of the community and made to suffer for it:

Therefore, unworthy priest, if after the discharge of semen you became a leper and were forced by the Law to live outside the camp . . .³²

. . . once one has fallen into the depths of utter degradation, he becomes an outcast from his heavenly home, is severed from the Body of Christ, is rebuked by the authority of the whole Church, is condemned by the judgment of all the holy fathers, is despised among men on earth, and is rejected from the company of the citizens of heaven.³³

Peter made these charges in a letter to Pope Leo IX (*Liber Gomorrhianus*). Though his suggestions were taken seriously by later moralists,

the Pope whose help he was invoking in an effort to banish all sodomites from the clergy largely ignored his recommendations.³⁴ Peter had quite graphically outlined, in his letter to the Pope, the four ways in which sodomy operates before recommending appropriate punishments:

There are some who pollute themselves; there are others who befoul one another by mutually handling their genitals; others still who fornicate between the thighs; and others who do so from the rear.³⁵

But Pope Leo, in his response, implies a degree of hypocrisy in Peter's investment in this critique:

The short book which you have written against the four-fold defilement of carnal pollution in becoming prose, but still more becoming reasoning, most dear son, manifests with obvious evidence that *the concentration of your mind with loving zeal has arrived at the resplendent bed of sparkling purity*. For one like you who has so raised the arm of the spirit against the obscenity of lust, has surely subdued the savagery of the flesh. (emphasis added)³⁶

Likewise, he closes his letter with a message of thanks which also includes an implicit criticism:

But, dearest son, I rejoice indescribably that you promote by the example of your life whatever you have taught by your eloquence. *For it is greater to teach by action than by words*. (emphasis added)³⁷

Despite Peter's overt stance in the *Liber Gomorrhianus*, however, there are a number of curious ways in which his work intersects with contemporary queer theory. For Peter wrote not only the first comprehensive guidebook to Christian homophobia, but also a work of incredible daring, the *De laude flagellorum*, in the last years of his life.³⁸ Both works were clearly written in a defensive mode, as justification for his own versions of the Law and as angry denunciations of those who had other ideas:

a certain abominable and most shameful vice has developed, and unless it be prevented as soon as possible by the severest punishment, it is certain that the sword of divine fury will be unsheathed, leading in its unchecked violence to the destruction of many.³⁹

In the *De laude flagellorum*, he denounces the presumption of those who would forgo this penitential practice:

Tell me, you who in your arrogance mock at Christ's passion, you who, in refusing to be stripped and scourged with Him, deride His nakedness and all His torments as foolish and vain things like the illusions that come to us in sleep, what will you do when you see Him who was stripped in public and hung on the Cross shining in the glory of His majesty . . . more glorious than all things, visible or invisible? . . . By what rash boldness or presumption do you hope to share in His glory, whose shame and injuries you scorned to bear?⁴⁰

Peter's principal claims are that sodomy is institutionalized in the monasteries of his day, that the Church is in imminent danger of destruction, and that the Penitentials are inconsistent in their recommendations because too many of the confessors are themselves sodomites. The rhetoric is fiery and cagey, for example, in the middle of a personal letter, in which Pope Leo is addressed as "you," Peter launches quite suddenly into a confrontational soliloquy ("But now we meet face to face, you sodomite, whoever you may be"), such that it is not entirely clear how much overlap there might be between one addressee and the other.⁴¹ That first apostrophe is followed by a whole string of similar epithets: "my good sodomite" (21), "miserable" or "unhappy soul" (35), implying that Peter holds the sodomite in his gaze, has his attention, knows his tricks better than he knows them himself; and that the sodomite, in an Althusserian moment of *prise de conscience* will recognize himself in this call.⁴² Peter's appropriation of the panoptical seat of vision is at the same time a recuperation of the confessional mode, the object of much of his critique, but this time with Peter as interrogator. The imaginary sodomite is the silent subject *for whom* Peter speaks, since, of course, we never "hear" anyone but Peter, *and* the subject whom he judges. This is by any standard an overtly sadistic scenario, with Peter casting the drama, writing the dialogue, directing the action, and enjoying the privileged view afforded of his own work at play.

To effect this surgical intervention to cut from the mystical body of Christ "the befouling cancer of sodomy" (6), he first needs some sodomites to purge. He must therefore induce someone to identify himself as "sodomite," answer the call; and so he provides the category

in which the sodomite might recognize himself through identification with those already so identified. Who then is this sodomite, this subject so in control of his subjection that he places himself outside one Law, yet inside another? Like the postcolonial subject, he steps in and out of discourses and registers, able to call on at least three subjective stances (subject to Law, outside of Law, hybrid) in relation to power. Given, in addition, that Peter's reforms would produce an eremitical, same-sex, monastic community, quite extreme in terms of self-mutilation and theatrical suffering, where behavior is entirely transparent to power, how can we see Peter's community as anything but "queer"?

Though Peter asserts that no man is allowed to publish canons since the privilege belongs to the Pope alone, he justifies his intervention on humanitarian grounds: how, he says, can I love my neighbor if I "negligently allow the wound, of which I am sure he will brutally die, to fester in his heart; if . . . I fail to cure them by the surgery of my words" (50)?⁴³ Peter is obviously used to recuperating the Law, performing it, and rewriting it, just as when he dared rewrite the rules of Saint Benedict for his order at Fonte Avellana. The God whose word he sees himself enacting is similarly vengeful and controlling, exemplified in the passage he cites from Deuteronomy: "My sword shall feed on flesh" (Deut. 32.42, 43). Peter claims that God so detested sodomy that "even when he had not yet curbed other vices, he already kept condemning this one with the precepts of the Law, under pain of the strictest penalty" (8).⁴⁴ The sodomite, like Onan (Genesis 38.9–10), will be struck with the "sword of divine fury" (5) and killed "because he did a detestable thing."⁴⁵ As agent of the Lawgiver, Peter sets out to regulate desire: not by banishing it from the community, as if one could; but by channeling it, creating the performative categories through which it can and cannot be expressed, redefining the transgressive routes through which male desire will travel. As might be expected, these routes are corporeal and focus almost exclusively on the individual hermit, subjected to what Peter insistently refers to as "the discipline," a regime of physical penance, including deprivation of food and comfort and the practice of self-flagellation.

As a theologian, then, despite his "innovations," he presents himself as working within a traditional doctrinal mode, i.e., basing his arguments on an authoritative framework, and indeed his text is imbued

with citations from the Old Testament and the Epistles of Saint Paul.⁴⁶ He nonetheless strays often into the imagistic mode in an attempt to produce a more shocking, and more memorable, effect on the reader.⁴⁷ Indeed, while setting out biblical injunctions against sodomy, he dips frequently into the semantic field of disease and contagion, so as to appeal to the sensual and visual realms. Sodomy is a “deadly wound reeking in the very body of Holy Church” (14).⁴⁸ It is equated to gonorrhea, and leprosy (26, 37), to a “vice that . . . slays modesty, strangles chastity, and slaughters virginity with a knife dipped in the filthiest poison.” It “defiles all things, sullies all things, pollutes all things; and . . . it allows nothing to be pure, nothing to be spotless, nothing to be clean.” It does not just “corrupt”; it “pollutes” (27), reeks and sickens.⁴⁹

The body thus sickened in Peter’s work flits uneasily from collective to singular, from institutional to private. The “mother of all churches . . . bathed in the utter brilliance that Truth imparts” (5), is also the polluted body that harbors the deadly and reeking wound of sodomy (14). Thus, in violating the body of the Church, the sodomite violates the collective body, the identity from which he has now been banished, his former self. As in Alain de Lille’s *De planctu*, written a century later, the sodomitical act is seen as an attack on a collective body of males which is, nonetheless, referred to as feminine – Mother Nature and Mother Church. This is, in fact, one of the few allusions to women one finds in the *Liber Gomorrhianus*, other than a brief discussion of the relative wickedness of raping nuns and goddaughters as opposed to animals, or other males. Femininity acts then both as a wall which demarcates the male collective, a sort of womb which gives structure to the community but which has no place within, and as the devouring she-monster which attacks that wall and rapes the men within, the very embodiment of sodomy itself:

This utterly diseased Queen of Sodom renders him who obeys the laws of her tyranny infamous to men and odious to God. She mobilizes him in the militia of the evil spirit and forces him to fight unspeakable wars against God. She detaches the unhappy soul from the company of the angels and, depriving it of its excellence, takes it captive under her domineering yoke. She strips her knights of the armor of virtue, exposing them to be pierced by the spears of every vice. She humiliates

her slave in the church and condemns him in court; she defiles him in secret and dishonors him in public; she gnaws at this conscience like a worm and consumes his flesh like fire.⁵⁰ (31)

We then see the underside of this devouring femininity – sodomy as woman – in the gender-switching imagery used to characterize the sodomite, once he has been infected:

Truly the daughter of my people has suffered a grievous injury, because a soul that had been the daughter of Holy Church has been cruelly wounded by the enemy of the human race with the shaft of impurity. She who had once been mildly and gently nourished on the milk of sacred wisdom at the court of the eternal king, is now viciously infected with the poison of lust and lies *rigid and distended* in the sulphurous ashes of Gomorrah.⁵¹ (33)

Peter essentially erases femininity by incorporating it within the masculine, as when he alludes to the rigid and distended phallus of the raped, feminine because polluted, victim; but he also “heterosexualizes” the rape. The allegorical figure of Sodomy is not satisfied just to invade the particular subject; she attempts as well to “destroy the walls of our heavenly fatherland and . . . rebuild the defenses of Sodom that were razed by fire” (30–31). This same phallic female is, however, also equated to the maternal male. Listen to how Peter, in one of his sermons, colonizes the female womb by placing it within the male body of the faithful:

we must consider, dearly beloved, what a dignity is ours, and what a likeness there is between us and Mary. Mary conceived Christ in her bodily womb, and we bear Him about in the womb of our mind. Mary fed Christ when she gave milk from her breasts to His tender lips; and we feed Him with the varied delights of our good works.⁵²

Thus Sodomy disrupts gender, corrupts *within* a community at the same time that it batters at the walls that enclose it; reminding us that the saintly body is already and always a sexual body. Just as the virtuous hermit (41) is condemned for imagining that corruption can be eliminated without violence (he mistakenly assumes that “whenever he is excited by passion . . . he should eject semen by handling his organ, just as if he were blowing his nose” [41]),⁵³ so the Church hierarchy is

wrong in thinking that it can simply eject the impulses of the sinners through penance – simple blood-letting – without having to cut-off completely, even murder, the offending party. Peter is insistent that if even one member within the collective is corrupted, then “the whole body together with the soul is afterwards tortured forever in a dreadful holocaust” (47).⁵⁴ Thus the sodomite is an agent of pollution which, contagion-like, drags others along with itself to destruction (6).⁵⁵ His crime is incestuous, an unnatural offence against the group as well as the individual, as he preys on members of the community who are his own spiritual “sons.”⁵⁶

Up to this point, we could probably say that Damian thinks of sexual identities entirely in terms of acts: that sodomites are simply those who perform any of the four acts outlined in the first section of the *Liber Gomorrhianus*. Yet he does imply throughout the rest of his discussion that sodomites are sodomites even after the acts have been completed, during confession, and when they associate with others of their kind. He assumes that such men are recognizable to one another while escaping the notice of most and that they can therefore more easily dissolve within the larger community and infiltrate even the highest echelons of power. They are thus to be feared as unnatural and diabolical because they successfully defy the Law. Like Satan, they seek to insinuate themselves, through illicit entry, into the body of Christ. Because of his spiritual blindness, the sodomite cannot “recognize the entrance that is obviously right before him or even that the door is Christ (as he himself says: ‘I am the door’ [John 10.9, 13]).”⁵⁷ He must therefore attempt “violently to break in on angels” through “some impassable obstacle of the wall” rather than through “the obvious gateway” (14).⁵⁸

Peter has specific recommendations on punishment: public flogging, loss of tonsure, besmirching with spittle, confinement in prison, iron chains, and a diet of barley bread suitable only for a horse or mule. These are to be followed by a less conspicuous regime:

a further six months living in a small segregated courtyard in the custody of a spiritual elder, kept busy with manual labor and prayer, subjected to vigils and prayers, forced to walk at all times in the company of two spiritual brothers, never again allowed to associate with young men for purposes of improper conversation or advice.⁵⁹ (29)

To return to the question of how sodomites are to recognize themselves in Peter's characterization: "if sodomites of themselves are unable to discern their own identity, they may at least be enlightened by those with whom they are assigned to a common confinement for prayer" (28).⁶⁰ Thus it is that the sodomite might only come to know himself as a sodomite once he has been told as much by others facing the same accusation and punishment. Peter's slip here is not negligible: if the sinner does not recognize himself as a sinner, how can he have sinned? His solution is performative: call the sinner a sinner and he is a sinner. Subject him to ritualistic penance in the form of community ostracism and he will soon embrace the identity and do penance.

With all this talk about metaphorical bodies, how does Damian relate religiosity to corporeality? How do the saintly bodies produced from within the discipline form a community? From a not altogether obvious but nonetheless appropriate source, Leo Bersani sheds some light:

Societies defined by those structures (*of dominance and submission*) both disguise and reroute the satisfactions, but their superficially self-preservative subterfuges can hardly liberate them from the aegis of the death drive. S/M lifts a social repression in laying bare the reality behind the subterfuges, but in its open embrace of the structures themselves and its undisguised appetite for the ecstasy they promise, it is fully complicit with a culture of death.⁶¹

Though I am a bit hesitant to relate Peter Damian too explicitly to sadism or masochism, since it subsumes him within a formation that he pre-dates, I do think that "Damianism" has much in common with its later cousins. His open defense and praise of flagellation does lay bare structures of dominance and submission by advocating an explicit identification with the tortured Christ; and his claim that such discipline is the best way to purge the passions, take leave of the self, cleave more insistently to the collective and mystical body, resonates quite interestingly with Foucault's notion of embodied discourse, or "spiritual corporeality."⁶² The "discipline," as Peter called it, refers specifically to the act of self-flagellation, but is only one part of the larger practice of corporal penance which included strict fasting and deprivation, almost total silence, and the isolation of monks, in pairs, within cells, in which one party was designated as superior and the other as submissive. Peter

was, of course, criticized for these innovations but he offers a spirited defense:

How blessed, how wonderful a sight! When the celestial Judge looks forth from heaven and man abases himself in atonement for his sins! There the accused, sitting in judgment in the tribunal of his inmost being, holds three-fold office: in his heart he appoints himself as judge, in his body he appears as defendant, while with his hands he rejoices to assume the role of executioner; as though the holy penitent would say to God: Lord, it is not necessary to command your official to punish me, nor is it to your advantage to strike fear into me with the retribution of a just trial. I have laid hands upon myself, have taken revenge and offered myself in place of my sins. . . . The angels . . . delight to announce this event to God, although the unseen Judge has already beheld the selfsame deed with pleasure. This is the victim which is made a living sacrifice, borne aloft by angels and offered to God. And thus the victim of the human body is invisibly joined to that unique sacrifice which was offered on the altar of the cross; thus is every sacrifice gathered into a single treasure, both that which each member and that which the head of all the elect has offered.⁶³

Several features of this amazing citation attract my attention. What looks like a call to masochism, to submission to the Oedipal father, is just as much a celebration of the sadistic, as Peter ecstatically identifies with God's delight (*jouissance*) at the narcissistic spectacle of His own sacrifice. The scopophilic identification with the suffering victim constitutes the *jouissance* of the Godhead, as God's ultimate pleasure, according to this fantasy, is in seeing himself be seen suffering. The circular and self-enclosed pleasure of God thus seems curiously sodomitical, at least in Damian's terms, i.e., indifferent to difference. The self-punishing monk is told to make of himself all that he needs, to find within the judge, defendant, victim and executioner and thus to banish lack. This call to find within the self the very persecutors and victim which ensure our subjectivity also resonates with Damian's similar, albeit ironic, call in the *Liber Gomorrhianus* to find our sexual other within the self:

Tell us, you unmanly and effeminate man, what do you seek in another male that you do not find in yourself? What difference in sex, what varied features of the body? What tenderness, what softness of sensual charm? What smooth and delightful face? Male virility, I say, should

terrify you, and you should shudder at the sight of manly limbs. For it is the function of the natural appetite that each should seek outside himself what he cannot find within his own capacity. *Therefore if the touch of the masculine flesh delights you, lay your hands upon yourself and be assured that whatever you do not find in yourself, you seek in vain in the body of another.*⁶⁴ (35)

What looks in one context like a condemnation of sodomy as imaginary and narcissistic sounds, in light of the previous citation, like a call to masturbation. Make love, as Woody Allen would have it, to the one who truly loves you; or in Peter's terms, to the one who does not repulse.

Bersani theorizes in *Homos*, that effacement of lack, that keystone of Peter's program, lies at the heart of same-sex desire and the foundation of a queer community:

Lack . . . may not be inherent in desire; desire in homo-ness is desire to repeat, to expand, to intensify the same, a desire that Freud, with a courageously confused perplexity, proposes as the distinctive characteristic of the sexual in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. The aim of desire grounded in lack is the filling of the lack through the incorporation of difference. The desire in others of what we already are is, on the contrary, a self-effacing narcissism, a narcissism constitutive of community in that it tolerates psychological difference because of its very indifference to psychological difference. This narcissistic subject seeks a self-replicating reflection in which s/he is neither known nor not known; here individual selves are points along a transversal network of being in which otherness is tolerated as the non-threatening margin of, or supplement to, a seductive sameness.⁶⁵

If we can accept for just a moment Bersani's notion of homo-ness as a "self-effacing narcissism," then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that a God who seeks a "self-replicating reflection" of his own suffering is sort of the ultimate homo. And this narcissism, which supposedly constitutes a community indifferent to psychological difference and otherness, sounds very much like the prototype of Damian's eremitical collective, or for that matter, Foucault's S/M utopia, in which identities are abandoned in favor of a truly egalitarian and reversible regime of bodily pleasures. Sex, especially when understood as a relation of power, may be banished from such a community, but surely not pleasure. And to what is that pleasure allied if not difference, as written into any relation of

power? The notion that lack and difference might be effaced or rendered insignificant looks like part of the utopian thinking that characterized monastic theorists like Aelred of Rievaulx and Peter Damian and formed the bedrock of early queer theory.

Georges Bataille saw the sexual as a form of “self-shattering” self-debasement, in which “the melancholy of the post-Oedipal superego’s moral masochism is wholly alien, and in which, so to speak, the self is exuberantly discarded.”⁶⁶ Peter Damian would probably subscribe to the letter of that argument, if not the context.⁶⁷ He too discusses the sexual as a form of “self-shattering” but one which depends *completely* upon the moral masochism of the post-Oedipal superego. Peter is all for self-shattering but there is “good” shattering that comes from adequate penitential practice, especially flagellation and silence, and “bad” shattering, which results from sexual debasement, humiliation, and the scorn of the community. We might see the two routes as parallel, even leading to the same end, in the same way that Gide or Genet do, in Bersani’s readings. And, indeed, we might see the *Liber Gomorrhianus* as simply another type of flagellation, a verbal laceration meant to produce the same sort of elimination of the subject through (pleasurable) abjection. What most galls Peter, however, and it comes out repeatedly in his characterization of the imaginary sodomites around him, is that they do not play along with his script. Even as they efface lack, they uphold difference (and eroticize it); they do not disintegrate through debasement but instead take refuge undercover; they do not even feel the need to confess, unless it be to one another. They do not merge into an identity-less mystical body; instead they form an alternative body within the community from within which to defy the master’s Law. These subjects militate, converse, and conspire, aim at high Church offices and get them; in essence, operate a ring of successful double agents who get on with it, forming what today might be referred to dismissively as a “gay mafia.”

Peter, of course, had in mind a very much “queerer” community, in which denunciation and scapegoating of sodomites is essential since, in Judith Butler’s words, “the act of renouncing homosexuality . . . paradoxically strengthens homosexuality, but it strengthens [it] . . . as the power of renunciation.”⁶⁸ It is Peter’s personal renunciation of sodomy that allows for what I would call a “same-sexual” frame of mind, one

that exalts sameness and loss of subjectivity rather than difference and lack. But in doing so it celebrates as well what Bersani called “a culture of death.” Like Gide, in Bersani’s reading, Peter celebrates unidentifiable and unlocatable same-sex relations, which eliminate from “sex” *the necessity of any relation whatsoever*, a “gliding into an impersonal sameness ontologically incompatible with analyzable egos,” a “self-divestiture enacted as a willful pursuit of abjection, a casting away not only of possessions but also of the attributes that constitute the self as a valuable property.”⁶⁹

This pursuit of abjection is key to Peter Damian’s radical penitential mode. As he says in regard to his own spirituality:

I often beheld, by an immediate perception of my mind, Christ hanging from the Cross, fastened with nails, and thirstily received His dripping blood in my mouth.⁷⁰

And it is again not entirely clear how ironic he is being when he counsels his charges to:

begin an unremitting struggle against the flesh, always standing armed against the dangerous disease of passion . . . ; if the sly tempter puts before your eyes an enticing vision of the flesh, address your thoughts at once to the tombs of the dead and take careful note of what you find there that pleases the touch or delights the eye.⁷¹ (46)

This embrace of death, or relinquishing of subjectivity, might well be part of a specifically religious impulse to “overcome the isolated discontinuity of being with a sense of continuity,” but it cannot shake off that supplement of enjoyment, as Damian himself admits:⁷²

When any holy soul is truly joined to its Redeemer by love, then it is united with Him as if on the bridal couch in a bond of intimate delight.⁷³

Where Peter Damian’s queer utopia parts ways with the sexless continuum of Gide or Genet or even Foucault is, finally, in his reliance on institutions. Not for him the pleasure of dissolution he counsels to others. He is not able to give up selfhood (as his hundreds of texts testify) or power, any more than his God is. His pleasure is in seeing and listening, from the exalted position of father/confessor/law giver, the

fantasy of embodying the gaze. Damian needs the nameless sodomites he sees through the confessional curtain to secure that fantasy. The corporeal *jouissance* he preaches – self-flagellation and non-verbal communication, in very close quarters – might seem to gesture toward the impossibility of the sexual relation, queer or straight, but it promises an alluring alternative: subjectless bodies, sexless pleasure, a truly mimetic community in which someone is *always* watching.

Though Peter's radical views were not accepted by the more moderate Pope Leo, the rabid rhetoric of the *Liber Gomorrhianus* became a model for moral castigation in the following century. As the Church sought to heighten its influence over the faithful through tighter controls of political and domestic matters, apologists stepped forward to denounce moral laxity and establish the need for Church guidance, using arguments forwarded by Peter Damian.

JOHN OF SALISBURY

John of Salisbury (1115–80) was one of the most learned and critical commentators of his age and one whose experience was considerably broader than most. He studied in France for a dozen or so years (1138–50), served first as secretary to the Archbishop of Canterbury, then as advisor to Pope Hadrian IV, and finally as secretary to Thomas Beckett, a part of which time he spent in exile in Reims. After Thomas's death he served as Bishop of Chartres. He recorded these rich experiences in his prodigious writings, especially in the *Policraticus* (1159), an account of court life under Henry II, and the *Metalogicon*, a portrait of the intellectual life and curriculum of the late twelfth century. Throughout his life, John wrote on a wide range of topics but returned often to the subject of the Plantagenet court, in one guise or another. While not without its own blind-spots and prejudices, his account is remarkably lucid.

Having studied with the greatest teachers of his day, John was uniquely able to comment on the newly fashionable incorporation of classical material into contemporary literature and to see clearly how the classical past could be used to comment on the Christian present. Though his comments on sexuality are minimal, he returns frequently to that subject under a variety of guises and it is to those passages that I will devote my attention. As proper Freudians, we could argue that

John's own obsessions keep slipping through his sometimes petulant prose, but it might be more accurate to observe that John quite simply sees sexuality not as an independent domain of the human experience but as an integral part of everything else that concerns him. Thus, while discussing almost any issue, one often gets the uncanny impression that John is really talking about gender and sex. The unlikely topic of hunting, a seeming obsession with John, provides an illustration of this Freudian tendency to conflate topics.⁷⁴

John's cultural history of the topic attributes to the Thebans the introduction and spread of hunting in Western cultures. It was they who formulated the rules of what he is unsure to label a profession or a vice and it is this association which is said to lie at the root of their tragic history and the tales of Oedipus and Acteon.⁷⁵ The Thebans then passed their knowledge of hunting on to the Phrygians (Trojans), according to John "an effeminate, spineless people, fickle and utterly lacking in modesty."⁷⁶ John writes this, of course, knowing full well that the Plantagenets had claimed to be the direct descendants and crowned successors of the Trojans. Ganymede serves for him as the figure of the Trojan hunter, stolen by Zeus first to serve him as cup-bearer and then "for purposes of illicit and unnatural love" (13). John displays no sympathy for Ganymede's plight, however; on the contrary, with his declaration that "pleasure, blind to sobriety, blushes not to prostitute itself indiscriminately" (13), he implies that Ganymede is quite content with his station.

Ulysses then takes up the mantle and blame for having brought hunting back from Troy into Greece in the form of "birds equipped with horn and spurs . . . to incite them to attack their kind to the surprise and delight of the spectators" (16). John develops this association between hunting, violence, and sodomy first through the figures of Acteon as stag, attacked by his own, and Ulysses's birds who "attack their own kind"; and then through the explicit association between Ganymede, hunting, and the illicit pleasure of sodomy.⁷⁷ Ulysses is a conduit for such practices but is not himself implicated. He claims that it was Circe who taught him all he knows, with her charms and potions, and so, according to John, "the illicit cup of pleasure was passed to the Greeks" (16). Ulysses himself, having resisted Circe's charms, is free from the degraded and spiritless state of those who are bound to live under a

harlot's sway, i.e. the regime of pleasure into which Ganymede has been introduced, presumably sexual license with whatever sex, and for this reason he forbids his son, Telemachus, to take up hunting. The "inferior sex" is particularly well suited to the hunting of birds, we are told, because inferior creatures are always more prone to rapine (17). Both Achilles and Bacchus were taught to hunt in the forest and thus "lost [their] awe of nature and fear of death":

In truth those who have such inclinations and desires are half-beast. They have shed the desirable element, their humanity, and in the sphere of conduct are made themselves like unto monsters. From levity to lewdness, from lewdness to lust, and finally, when hardened, they are drawn into every type of infamy and lawlessness. (18)

The sense that John is always speaking out of both sides of his mouth becomes clearer as he dismisses agriculture, sailing, and industry, in their turn as they all call into question natural boundaries and laws. He is especially troubled that the Church Fathers never paid more attention to hunting for "the inordinate pleasure that it causes impairs the human mind and undermines reason itself" (23). Pleasure of any kind, it turns out, is the true enemy:

which, devoted to feasting, drinking, banquets, song and dance, sport, over-refinements of luxury, debauchery, and varied types of defilement, weakens even robust souls and, by a sort of irony on nature's part, renders men softer and more corrupt than women. (24)

Both hunting and gambling, it turns out, "tone down the manly voice into dulcet, effeminate strains; to forget their manhood and with vocal and instrumental music to disgrace their birth. It is from such parents that children are infected with their moral diseases" (29). The association of pleasure with vice and the non-natural continues: "the result is that in these times fathers leave degenerate sons who disgrace their manhood with effeminate vices." Hunting leads to pleasure, which leads to lust, which leads to femininity, which means loss of masculinity, since any trace of the effeminate pollutes definitively the masculine.⁷⁸ Femininity is like a virus which attaches itself and eats the host from within, similar in this respect to Peter Damian's notion of sodomy. John returns again and again to this formula.

Music is another such ambivalent topic. It has a legitimate aim, according to John and that is to unite and order the universe; but it, too, has been corrupted by the “Phrygian mode and other corrupting types” (32):

[Music] . . . grieves and laments its disfigurement by a vice that is not inherent in it and by the fact that a harlot’s appearance is given to that which was wont to inspire virile minds with manly ideas. The singing of love songs in the presence of men of eminence was once considered in bad taste, but now it is considered praiseworthy for men of greater eminence to sing and play love songs which they themselves with greater propriety call *stulticivia*, follies. (32)

John’s fear of sweetness of voice and polyphony emerges in a series of metaphors of gendering and ungendering. Such artifice in music enervates its simple listeners with “effeminate dalliance of wanton tones” (32) and, in a return to his hunting imagery, resembles the songs of the Sirens. The mind loses its power of reason and stirs “lascivious sensations in the loins” (32). He cites as support the Greeks’ banishing of the Phrygian mode from their land and the Thracian women pouring out their indignation upon Orpheus for having rendered their men, through his music, weak and effeminate (33). Like hunting, music turns out to be essentially about pleasure; pleasure is instantly equated with sex; and sexual desire is, by rote definition, feminine. Thus Orpheus, a figure of polyvalent sexual tastes, stands for music and thus for the seduction of sodomy. The performance of music in the sanctuary of the church (“the effeminate dalliance of wanton tones” [32]), with its “excessively caressing melodies of voices beginning, chiming in, carrying the air, dying away, rising again, and dominating” (32) is already figured as a sexual performance. John’s fear of sexual rapture of any type finds expression in this horror of caressing and the rhythms of sensual combat. He applauds those courageous spiritual leaders who have banned it from their religious establishments.⁷⁹

It is not surprising, therefore, to see John rage at the idea of secular music and entertainments. Church music lures one into transgression of boundaries; secular entertainment breaks these taboos openly. Like hunters and sodomites, court performers are a type of “monster”:⁸⁰

Concerning actors and mimes, buffoons and harlots, panderers and other like human monsters which the prince ought rather to exterminate entirely than to foster, there needed to be no mention in the law, which not only excludes all such abominations from the court of the prince but totally banishes them from among the people. (36 n.6)

John's rather extreme call for extermination echoes that of Peter Damian one hundred years earlier and the vehemence of Alain de Lille's personification of Genius in the *De planctu naturae*, an almost contemporary text. Princes, on whom one should be able to count in maintaining decorum, support "the procession of mimes, jumping and leaping priests, buffoons, Aemilian and other gladiators, wrestlers, sorcerers, jugglers, magicians, and a whole army of jesters" (38). What these performers are blamed for is "shamelessly disclos[ing] that which in shame they had concealed" (38). Thus, as in Peter Damian's condemnation of sodomy, what needs to be held back, excluded from the community, is already there, even when not visible. Though these performers' shameful secret is never disclosed, John implies that it is by its nature obscene and will inevitably lead the honorable man to disclose as well "the incontinence of his mind . . . , proclaim his lewdness" (38).

Citing Scipio Africanus, John deplores the popularity of vernacular, secular song at the courts and among the Anglo-Norman nobility in general: "Our freeborn maidens and youths are taught dishonorable conduct; they go accompanied by pimps, the harp and the lute to the school of dancing, surrounded by pimps . . ." (368–369). He cites approvingly Macrobius' caustic description of Hortensius as the type of man who affects the vices of the actor even off stage:⁸¹

Hortensius . . . after whom those males who used powder on their faces are called Hortensiani, not because he was the first to indulge in the practice, but because he was the most conspicuous. . . . He was, and intentionally, very soft-spoken, and a man who displayed great elegance in dress. He clothed himself with a care that verged upon indecency. . . . Gazing at himself, he would so drape the toga upon his person that the ingenious knot would hold the pleats. . . . All this is reminiscent of the deceptive artificiality of the harlot. . . . What has a man to do with a mirror except to see by the lines of his face [. . . the effects of study, foreign travel, wider experience, and advancing age]. (371)

Once again, the final danger of theatre is feminization of males, and in John's lexicon feminization is a term so broad as to include almost all of what exists beneath that veneer of control and resistance to the seductions of pleasure that he calls virility. Like sodomy, femininity, usually seen as a form of artifice, lurks just beneath the surface, ready to take hold of the thoughtless sinner.

Narcissus joins Ganymede, Orpheus, and other figures of sexual ambiguity in John's digression about self-love. Men who "endeavor to grasp unsubstantial clouds . . . striv[e] to seize something solid in vacuity, are forgetful of themselves, though at the same time . . . with their partial eyes, have only themselves in view . . . [they] run after visionary shadows of mere opinion . . . aspire to the impossible, making assumptions on the basis of the deceptive image of things" (311–312). Such men resemble Narcissus. Unlike the figure in the courtly reading developed in the *Roman de la rose*, John's Narcissus dies simply because he is captivated by the object of his gaze. The idolatrous gaze is always dangerous, nowhere more so than at court, so John finally condemns, at least potentially, all looking, all hearing, all attraction:

Death does indeed enter through the windows of the eye when one takes delight in the exhibitions of the circus, the contest of athletes, the adaptability of actors, the shapely forms of women, the sparkle of gems, gorgeous raiment, precious metals, and all else by which the liberty of the mind is enslaved. Again, if the ear be charmed by the organ's tones and the notes of the human voice, the mind's virility becomes effeminate as the result of the poet's verse, the acts of comedy and tragedy, the humor and wile of mimics, and all sort of stuff that enters the mind by the ear. (314)

His condemnation of poets and romance is particularly interesting since he was serving at the very court that is so often credited with having given vernacular literature the vital support it needed and which used that literature to promote its interests. While John denounces the effect of "romances and similar folly" on the listener, it is in terms of "our age" that he speaks, not of "our court":

But our own age, descending to romances and similar folly, prostitutes not only the ear and heart to vanity but also delights its idleness with the pleasures of eye and ear. It inflames our wantonness, seeking

everywhere incentives to vice. Does not the shiftless man direct his idleness and court slumber with the sweet tones of instruments and vocal melody, with gaiety inspired by musicians, and with the pleasure he finds in the narrator of tales . . . (36)

When finally he arrives officially at the topic of sodomy, after having circumvented it in all of the above discussions, John is curiously reticent. Instead of attacking with full force, outlining acts in detail like Peter Damian, John says simply: "I had intended to pass pervers by in silence who, being dishonorable, are and are seen to be worthy of dishonor. Respect for morals imposes silence, and modesty by natural instinct diverts its gaze from them. Need more be said?" (199). The answer is apparently "yes"; though by this point John has somewhat exhausted his arsenal. When everything leads to effeminacy, it is difficult to stigmatize sodomy any more than, say, polyphonic singing. John therefore treats "pervers" as panderers and prostitutes: "Their profession is that of prostituting their own chastity and of assaulting and violating that of others" (199).⁸² They sell not only themselves, but their wives and daughters as well, and though they suffer for it, "resentment is assuaged by the money made in the transaction, or at least it mitigates their suffering" (199). Men such as these "rise against nature herself like a new set of giants waging a new war against heaven" (200) though John never addresses why Nature puts up with it. They sell their sons at maturity, their daughters whenever another's lust can be assuaged.⁸³ Worst of all are older men who continue to be racked with desire: "they sink down into the weaker sex, effeminate as the result of vice and corruption of morals, though thanks to nature they have not the power to lose their sex completely" (200). Returning to his horror of the performer, the old and "rich lascivious wanton" is likened to an actor: "his hair elaborately frizzled and curled, he puts to shame a courtesan's make-up, an actor's costume, the dress of a noble, the jewels of a maiden, and even the triumphal robes of a prince" (200). He then lingers over the details of this person caught up in sensual pleasure. Citing Juvenal at length, he contemplates how the artificially softened hand explores the entire body of the other "with lecherous caress" (200).

Thus far we have seen John allude to and condemn, but largely avoid any direct confrontation or description of, same-sex relations.

This changes in a sort of parenthetical aside in which he explains his reluctance to disclose his real topic:

Such abominations should be spat upon rather than held up to view, and I would have been ashamed to insert an account of it in this work had not the apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, written even more explicitly on the theme: "For their women have changed the natural use into that use which is against nature. In like manner the men, also leaving the natural use of women, have burned in lusts one toward another, men with men working that which is filthy . . ." ⁸⁴ (200)

When he considers such relations, he claims only to be able to understand them through their association with violence and its handmaiden, seduction, but he also reasserts that in his day no such corruption or violence is necessary on the seducer's part. His victims are only too eager to be seduced: "the training of our youth from their earliest years is so bad that they, with lascivious glances, expression, bodily movements, the very dress they wear, and enticements scarcely permitted harlots, themselves solicit seduction" (201). Clearly worried nonetheless about the involuntary sexual fantasies that come to us in dreams, John cites Augustine as his authority that the body cannot lose its mark of chastity until the mind has offered its consent. This could be read as a personal note, an admission that John himself had experienced such dreams and involuntary pleasures but, if so, it does not lead him to soften his final condemnation.⁸⁵ John Boswell makes much of the fact that John cites no contemporary theology or ecclesiastical edicts in support of his condemnation, not surprising if all were as reticent to speak of the matter as he was.⁸⁶ Instead, John cites the Justinian Code (IX, ix. 31) as his backing for severe punishment:

When a man becomes a bride and a female a groom, what is their desire? When sex loses its place and it is not wrong to know that which is not for one's good, when the act of love is perverted and love is sought and is not found, then do we order statutes to rear their heads and teeth to be put into the law, that those who are guilty or likely to be, may be cowed by the avenging sword and stern penalties. (201)

These penalties include capital punishment (citing Leviticus) and the rightful wrath that God unleashed upon Sodom and Gomorrah

(Jer. 23.40). It could appear that John has simply run out of steam, having indicted every pleasure as a form of self-indulgence and defined self-indulgence itself as ultimately sexual: "the son of gluttony, since in the distribution of the bodily members the genitals are seen to be appended to the lower part of the belly. Consequently when the one is over nourished, the other naturally arises in its insolence" (296). He has talked himself into a corner in which all pleasures, all attention to the self other than an examination of conscience, lead finally to self-arousal, the insolent autonomy of the sexualized male body. All arousal thus leads logically to a loss of virility and beneath that veil lies the infinite expanse of the feminine, defined only in the negative: that which is not virile, strong, resistant to pleasure, controlled, contained, or governable. Where femininity and sodomy begin, end, and overlap is difficult to ascertain.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF RICHARD THE LIONHEART

In 1948, the historian J. H. Harvey "outed" Richard Lionheart, saying that he was "breaking the conspiracy of silence surrounding the popular hero."⁸⁷ John Gillingham debunked that outing in 1992 on the pretext that the claims made about Richard's sexuality were based on nothing more than legends propagated by readers not capable of understanding the many connotations that the word "sodom," as uttered by a medieval hermit, might have carried. So far so good: sodomy, as we have seen, is often simply a marker of otherness and difference and applied indiscriminately to the non-white, non-Christian, non-reproducing foreigner. Gillingham did not, however, stop there. In his argument, reasonable doubt about the sexual life of the favored son of Eleanor of Aquitaine somehow morphed into scholarly certainty. Since there is no "evidence" of Richard's homosexuality, Gillingham argued, we must therefore dismiss the charge.⁸⁸ This positivist line of reasoning is difficult to defend. What exactly stands as reliable evidence of twelfth-century sexual conduct other than bodily fluids and DNA testing? Why is what contemporary chroniclers said about Richard to be understood as a "charge"? Finally, if, as Gillingham would have it, Richard was not "homosexual," was he really, by process of elimination, "heterosexual," "bisexual," "asexual"? Is that how people really experience sexuality and,

moreover, is it even remotely possible that his contemporaries thought in such binary terms?

The “charge” against Richard is more subtly addressed in C. Stephen Jaeger’s *Ennobling Love* but, not surprisingly, Richard once again emerges cleansed and vindicated.⁸⁹ Jaeger’s account of Richard’s sexuality, in an otherwise admirable book, is marred by language that assumes attitudes for twelfth-century royalty that are not necessarily warranted. For example: would a father, a King, having found his thirty-year-old son in bed with his longtime friend, the twenty-two-year-old heir to the French throne, be limited only to the two reactions that Jaeger mentions: either “outraged” at the sexual possibilities or “betrayed” by the intimation of a too-close political alliance between the carefully groomed rivals?⁹⁰ Might not he also have felt disappointed, jealous, curious, disgusted, or simply slighted over another overt act of disobedience? Is it necessarily true that a bond of love between two powerful princes which also included sexual affection would be thought “illicit?” If so, should not we read the “illicit” in a potentially positive light in an age when heroes – Tristan, Lancelot, the troubadours – are admired for their transgressions, and these very transgressions set the coordinates of private and literary fantasies for years to come? And, even if we buy Gillingham’s claim that there is no “evidence” of sexual involvement, is our only option therefore to assume a chaste and ennobling friendship between the two men? Is not sexuality, not to mention friendship, a little more complicated than that? After all, all sex is not publicly acknowledged; all desire is not recognized even by the desiring subject; and if perchance there was a sexual side to the friendship, does that somehow necessarily invalidate the idealized Ciceronian bonds of friendship that united them? Why, in sum, are we constantly reminded that to impose any notion of homosexuality on the Middle Ages is anachronistic when our equally time-warped notions of heterosexuality are spread, thick and unilateral, across centuries of critical commentary? Perhaps “sodomy,” as we might understand it today, and the “ennobling love” that Jaeger evokes, are not incompatible after all, at least not in semi-official chronicles written to curry favor or discredit a ruling house. In the course of re-examining some of the textual “evidence” about Richard Lionheart not mentioned by Gillingham and Jaeger, I want to suggest that sharing a bed with a

friend, even in 1187, was never as uncomplicated as scholars sometimes pretend.

As he prepared to depart on crusade in 1190, shortly after his crowning as King of England, Richard I drew up a legal code to govern the behavior of his co-crusaders. For murder on land, the murderer would be buried alive with the corpse of his victim; for murder at sea, he would be thrown overboard, tied to the unlucky corpse; for assault with a knife, he would suffer the loss of a hand; for theft, shaving of the head followed by tar and feathering of the scalp; for insulting a fellow crusader, an ounce of silver for every utterance of which he was found guilty.⁹¹ It is this last provision that piques my interest: what did Richard think of as an insult? When later that same year (1190) Richard met Philippe Auguste in Sicily en route to the Holy Land, did the chroniclers or the young kings/protagonists see their accounts of the reunion as insulting or slanderous?

All agree that Richard was a conundrum: doomed by family history yet, according to contemporary interpretations of prophecy and celestial signs, chosen by God to serve his purposes on earth.⁹² He was, after all, the son of infamous, scandalous parents. According to William of Newburgh, Henry II was a slave to vice, disrespectful of marriage (like his grandfather, Henry I), tolerant of heretics and Jews.⁹³ It surprised no one when Merlin's most dire predictions about mutiny and patricide among the Plantagenets came to pass.⁹⁴ Eleanor's family fares no better. Her famous grandfather, the first known troubadour, was excommunicated several times; her own behavior during the second crusade was said to have included incest with her uncle; and Gerald of Wales reports that she was also the former lover of Henry's own father, Geoffrey of Anjou, before marriage to his son.⁹⁵ Richard is always seen in the light of this larger family history, fighting to establish himself while battling personal demons and the burden of history.

Little is said about his personal life. He emerges first and foremost as a warrior, a military man whose prowess did not exclude periodic spiritual devotion. His undertaking of the Crusade established him as a popular hero and his record in battle, especially when compared to his continental counterparts (Philippe Auguste of France and Conrad of Montferrat), only enhanced his status.⁹⁶ One of the only topics of

a personal nature that concerns the chroniclers is, in fact, Richard's relationship with Philippe Auguste – not surprising given the close ties that bound them through childhood and the rivalry and struggle for control that marked their relations after Richard's coronation in 1189.

The portrait of Philippe that emerges from the chronicles is largely negative. He is cowardly, opportunistic, holds grudges, is ungenerous, the very antithesis of the ideal ruler. Richard's feelings for him swing from love to hate, never settling on indifference. Ralph of Coggeshall claims that Richard was obsessed by Philippe and reports that even his final hours on earth were marred by thoughts of him.⁹⁷ As Richard lay dying, he received holy communion for the first time in seven years and explained to those gathered the reason for his long abstinence. Having carried for years in his heart a deep hatred for the King of France, he chose not to profane the host by allowing it contact with his imperfect soul. Such a long abstinence would certainly have attracted attention from court and Church, not to mention the damage to his chances of salvation. We might then wonder whether Richard would have risked public criticism and eternal damnation over what any contemporary would have recognized as simple political antagonism. Feelings as strong as his seem, at the very least, to point in multiple directions.

Philippe and Richard had known each other their whole lives. Despite the annulment of the union of Louis VII and Eleanore of Aquitaine, and her new husband's subsequent accession to the throne of England, the royal houses of France and England remained united by their political destinies. Philippe, son of Richard's mother's former husband, was schooled with Richard. Both daughters from Louis's second marriage (sisters of Philippe) were raised at the English court as the fiancées of Henry and Eleanore's sons, Young Henry and Richard.⁹⁸ Benedict of Peterborough's infamous account of an 1187 meeting between the young King of France and the Duke of Aquitaine offers some evidence of their still-close ties:

Philippe . . . held him [Richard] in such high honor and for such a long time that they ate from the same dish and at night no bed kept them apart. The King of France cherished him as he did his own life; they loved each other with such a love that, confronted with the violence of their feelings for one another, the King of England [Henry II] was stupefied, wondering what to make of it.⁹⁹

Whatever sentiments still united them in 1187 were ruptured definitively soon thereafter. Richard refused to marry Philippe's sister Aélis to whom he had been promised at the age of four because, according to Gerald of Wales and Roger of Howden, Aélis had been his father's mistress and had borne him a son.¹⁰⁰ Philippe's subsequent threat to Richard is reported by Benedict: "Let him know that if he sends her back and marries another I will be his enemy and the enemy of all his people for as long as I live."¹⁰¹ If this is true, then the last meeting during which the two men met as friends occurred in Sicily, en route to the Holy Land in 1190. The intensity of this meeting in Messina, after separate crossings, was remarked upon by several chroniclers. Benedict of Peterborough says only that they were so close that one could not imagine anything breaking their love or coming between them, highly ironic in light of the incessant skirmishes that would mark the final five years of Richard's reign after his return from the crusade and captivity in 1194.¹⁰² Richard of Devizes presents a more suggestive account of their stay.¹⁰³ He also stresses the great affection in which they held one another and says that the Kings parted after the festivities "exhausted but not satisfied."¹⁰⁴ This expression is a citation from Juvenal's sixth satire (l. 130) in which it applies to the wife of the Emperor Claudius, "the imperial harlot," who left her bed each evening to take up a cell in a whorehouse, where she displayed her "gilded nipples" to clients, hoping to lure them in. At night's end, in Juvenal's telling:

she lingered as long as she could before closing her cell and sadly leaving, still on fire, clitoris rigid. At last she returned, *exhausted, but not fulfilled*, by her men; and with greasy grimy cheeks, and foul from the smoke of the lamp, she carried back to the emperor's couch the smell of the whorehouse.¹⁰⁵

Though the expression might have been a cliché among authors writing in Latin during this period, Devizes was writing for his prior, to keep him informed of happenings on the outside world, after his retirement to the Charter house of Witham.¹⁰⁶ Writing to a highly educated man, anxious for gossip, and in a period when citations from classical texts were common and valued, it is unlikely that the original connotation of the phrase was lost on its reader. If Devizes did mean to imply a sexual interlude between the Kings, then it is interesting to note that Richard's

role in the rest of the account is in no way tainted with suggestions of femininity, lasciviousness, or decadence, characteristics that generally accompany any suggestion of sexual activity between men in the earlier twelfth-century chronicles of John of Salisbury, Orderic Vitalis, and Walter Map.

On the contrary, Richard is for the first time called “the lion” in Devezes’s account; his anger and indignation are equated to righteous roaring; and it is rather he, the King, who calls his treacherous enemies “effeminate.”¹⁰⁷ It was also during this stay in Sicily that Richard’s mother, Eleanore, came to visit with the daughter of the King of Navarre, Berengaria, in tow: a woman whom Devezes referred to tastefully as “more intelligent than beautiful.”¹⁰⁸ Richard had held out for years against marriage with Aélis, his betrothed. He was therefore technically free to marry Berengaria but because they were still in the season of Lent, he left her in the custody of his sister and moved on to Cyprus. It was there, in May of the following year, that the marriage ceremony and coronation were performed. Roger of Howden’s rather flat account of their union speaks volumes about the passion behind it: “Then, after the marriage celebration, the King departed with his army and the famous city of Nicosia surrendered to him.”¹⁰⁹ No mention is made of a celebration or consummation; no pretext of love is invoked; and Berengaria essentially disappears from the chronicles.¹¹⁰ It is estimated that she saw Richard only very infrequently and that the marriage was essentially one of convenience. William of Newburgh admits candidly that Richard’s interest in marrying was to have an heir: “for he still had no son to succeed him on the throne and his predilection for pleasure inclined him to the practice of vice.”¹¹¹ Marriage was traditionally recommended by the Church as, among other things, a way to avoid the occasion of sin, especially the temptation of sodomy. Once Richard had married Berengaria, and Philippe had departed early from the Holy Land, the die was cast. Philippe lobbied hard to prevent Richard’s return from captivity and during the last five years of Richard’s life they or their forces fought incessantly.

Benedict of Peterborough claims that in the struggle for power over the continental holdings of Richard, the lords of Poitou came to prefer Philippe Auguste to the brutal King of England to whom they owed their allegiance. Richard, according to Benedict:

was wicked toward everyone, worse toward his own people and worst of all to himself. He ripped from their families the women, young girls and female family members of the free men who owed him allegiance and made them his concubines. Then, after having had his way with them, he passed them on to his knights to satisfy their needs and pleasures.¹¹²

Richard had let the “thorns of desire take over his mind and there was no way to remove them.”¹¹³ When finally he felt the need to repent, he brought before him all the bishops and archbishops in his entourage. Holding in his hand three sticks from which the bark had been peeled, he threw himself naked at their feet and confessed his sins while they inflicted penance upon him. As to the nature of the sins to which he was referring, there were apparently many to choose from.

Though Benedict claims that Richard brutalized young women and passed them on to his men, there is nothing in the record to indicate that what Richard was doing was anything other than rape. And while some historians have seen these rapes as an indication of affectional preference, I would maintain that rape is not an indication of sexual desire at all but a desire to impose one's will, in this instance a political will. Other than the accounts of Richard's early affection for Philippe Auguste, there is nothing in the chronicles to indicate that he loved anyone or felt impelled to procreate. It is particularly interesting that when he did marry, it was at the instigation and insistence of his mother, ever vigilant to protect her hereditary holdings in Aquitaine. Though Richard followed through on her wishes and married Berengaria, she seems not to have played any significant role in his life. The texts are silent on the subject of sexuality, not unusual for chronicles of the period, except for condemnations of unorthodox practices. Richard of Howden's account of a visit paid to Richard by a hermit is therefore significant for its inclusion. The unknown hermit, evoking a topos familiar to readers of Chrétien de Troyes's *Roman du graal*, appears at court to deliver this message to the King: “Remember the destruction of Sodom and give up forbidden pleasures; otherwise you will receive from God the punishment you deserve!”¹¹⁴ According to Howden, Richard chose to ignore the warning. Only later, when struck with illness, did he recognize the hermit as a divine messenger and call before him the clergy:

He did not blush to tell them of his shameful conduct. He did penance and received his wife with whom he had not had sexual relations in a long time. He gave up the forbidden forms of love and joined with his wife; both were of one flesh; and God brought health to his body and soul.¹¹⁵

For a time then, under threat of imminent death, Richard kept his vow to change his ways, stayed at Mass until it was over, gave alms to the poor, and maintained his chastity. None of the chroniclers specifies how long that resolve lasted. The only subsequent allusion to Richard's "vice" is his strange deathbed admission of his obsessive hatred for Philippe-Auguste. The best one can surmise from such "evidence" is that Richard's conduct, whatever it consisted of, was thought shameful by himself and others and that sex with his wife was seen as an appropriate tonic.

Final judgments on Richard as king are mixed. Ralph of Coggeshall claims that when Richard mounted the throne there was great hope that his "nobility of soul and the force of his military genius" would make of him "the model and mirror of all kings of the Norman dynasty."¹¹⁶ Instead, Richard never gave credit to God for his good fortune, and never "took care to correct the skewed morals he had acquired in the prime of his youth."¹¹⁷ Despite his cruelty, avarice, and lust, Ralph does admit that Richard was a great military hero, supported several religious institutions, and repented at the moment of death. Gerald of Wales says that Richard possessed three of the ideal qualities of a king: extraordinary energy and courage; extreme generosity and munificence; and strength of character and word. Richard was no doubt a great leader, and would have been the greatest of his age but for three more "contradictions in his character," unnamable according to Gerald.¹¹⁸ In calling him a "new Caesar," Gerald suggests a double vision of Richard. References to Caesar in the twelfth century operated like references to Trojans, an encouragement to double readings. In the *Policraticus*, written some forty years earlier, John of Salisbury cites a comic song supposedly known to soldiers at the time of the Roman victory over the Gauls: "Twas Caesar subdued Gaul, Nichomedes his Caesar, but Nichomedes did not enjoy a triumph for this subjugation."¹¹⁹ Dante also uses Julius Caesar as the figure of the warrior sodomite who conquers his enemy in war but is willingly conquered by him in bed (*Purgatorio* 26). Richard as lord and master who can be wooed with kisses is also an image that comes up

several times in troubadour poems.¹²⁰ If the reference is to Augustus, rather than Julius, the *Policraticus* offers a scurrilous anecdote about him as well:

Among the discreditable things attributed to Augustus by a certain individual was that of having won his adoption by submitting to the desires of his uncle. This was based on a rumor that Julius had admitted him on terms of great intimacy, and there was even mention of a violation of chastity. Another . . . reproached him saying that it was his custom to singe his legs with a torch to make the hair grow more downy.¹²¹

Though the chroniclers couched their comments in vague formulae such as “contradictions in character,” it is certainly within the range of “reasonable doubt” to assume that they are suggesting unmentionable sexual desires for, and relations with, other men. Accusations of sodomy directed at political leaders had some currency during this period, and several modern historians have read these chroniclers’ comments only as signs of political slander. Nevertheless, as in the case of earlier rulers, such accusations were used selectively. Richard is the only member of his family to be subjected to these charges: no one accuses Henry II or any of Richard’s brothers of sodomy, after all, and they were far from popular. As in the case of his great-uncle, King William Rufus, Richard became a target of such innuendo because he flaunted his disregard for cultural norms and expectations. Neither Richard nor William Rufus was heterosexual in the way that was expected of them, then or now; yet, interestingly, neither falls into that other despised category, the effeminate male. Richard married at age thirty-four, rarely saw his wife, slept with her as part of his penance after confessing to “peccatum illud” (that sin) and showed no visible concern over lack of an heir. Worse yet, William Rufus never married at all, despite the practical necessity of a dowry, political alliance, children, household management, etc. If, then, we are asked to discount the chroniclers’ suggestions of sodomy among Richard’s sins, and the hermit’s penitential discourse, then by the same token we should also disregard the accusations of profligate sexual activity with women that abound in accounts of other contemporary figures. According to the Church, lack of desire is an ideal state that leads to sanctity; chastity, even in marriage, is what all should aspire

to. But celibacy and lack of desire are, on the other hand, associated almost immediately with the open secret of sodomy, especially when the subjects are kings who have also been linked to excess, in the form of vanity, learning, music, or hunting.

The curious convergence of Richard as a “man’s man” – a figure of hypermasculinity who excels at military arts – and of Richard as a sodomite – one who is indifferent to sexual relations with women but not effeminate – makes him a pivotal figure in twelfth-century thought. In all of the contemporary attacks on sodomites that we have reviewed there is incessant slippage from issues of sexuality to issues of gender. Richard, in fact, flirted with such associations in composing troubadour verse, in deliberately associating himself and his reign with the exploits of the Arthurian courts celebrated in romance, and in flaunting the conventions of domesticity.¹²² It is not unlikely that his shadow, and that of his scandalous family, can be detected in descriptions of contemporary literary figures: knights such as Lanval, Guigemar, and Perceval and that doubly marked hero, the indirect founder of the Plantagenet dynasty, Eneas.¹²³ Like Alexis, Roland, Tristan, Perceval, and countless other heroic military and religious figures, Richard left no heir; like them, he seems to have been very aware of, and concerned about, his literary legacy.

Just to put the case of Richard in some perspective, let us compare the accounts of Richard’s life with those of another contemporary historical figure, William of Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, 1190–96. William was already a trusted aide when Richard was Count of Poitiers and continued to serve as a close friend after his coronation. When Richard left for the Third Crusade in 1190, it was only mildly surprising that he would leave William, rather than his brother, John, in charge of the kingdom. The results were disastrous. William, already an unpopular figure in England, was unable to maintain order with brother John plotting to upset it. By 1194, when William’s forces attacked the priory of St. Martin’s and dragged Geoffrey, Richard’s illegitimate half-brother and sometime pretender to the throne, from the altar, his stock had fallen so low that he was obliged to flee the country.¹²⁴ He had not always been so hated, or perhaps he was simply tolerated as a close associate of Richard before his departure and captivity. In 1189, Gerald of Wales dedicated his *Journey Through Wales* to William of Longchamp but a

few years later he could write in his *Life of Geoffrey, Archbishop of York*, that William is the “belua multiformis” (the monster of many forms [or of all iniquities, according to Thorpe]).¹²⁵ In that same work, Gerald accuses William of being a lover of boys and presiding over a court at which heterosexuals were ridiculed for being different: “Si ea quae sunt curiae non agis, quid in curia quaeris” (If you don’t do what courtiers do, then why are you at court?).¹²⁶ In one anecdote, a mother has brought to him her attractive son for his pleasure but, after having undressed the boy and found him to be a she, William will have nothing to do with her. Benedict of Peterborough’s long account of his disgrace also returns to the issue of sexual ambiguity. After enumerating William’s many sins as tyrant, bigot, oppressor, and hypocrite, he tells the following anecdote: In attempting to flee the country, William had had to disguise himself as a woman, “that sex he had always abhorred.”¹²⁷ Sitting on the beach at Dover, awaiting transport to the Continent, he was spotted by a “half-naked fisherman” who mistook him for a prostitute. With one arm around William’s neck, he put the other up his dress until he came to his breeches and incontrovertible proof that he was a male. “Come see, everyone, I’ve found a man in this woman!” cried the fisherman. The bishops’ servants were able to get him out of that situation but he was not so lucky the second time around. Approached by two English-speaking women, he was unable to respond to their questions since he spoke only French. Suspicious of who this stranger might be, the women ripped off his veil and cried out to all bystanders when they saw his freshly shaved face: “Get over here! Let’s stone this monster who has dishonored both of our sexes!”¹²⁸ What follows is the total humiliation of William at the hands of a mob. He is thrown against the rock, dragged through the streets so the crowds could spit on him and hurl their insults and scorn. He is finally thrown into a dark jail cell where Benedict exults over his fall:

He who once dragged others is now dragged; taken by force is he who used to take; bound and tied is he who used to do the tying; imprisoned he who used to imprison. . . . He became the shame of his neighbors, the terror of his friends, an object of derision for the entire population. If only he had sullied just his own name as a priest rather than the whole state of the priesthood.¹²⁹

Several features of the story draw our attention. First, it is unclear to what degree the Bishop allowed or even invited the fisherman's attentions. Though Benedict never says that this attention would have pleased William, he also never implies a struggle until after the fisherman has called out his discovery to the crowd. It is also interesting to note that William is loathed for having dishonored the priesthood and the two sexes rather than for his political crimes against the people and the Church. Earlier in his telling of the story, Benedict says that William abused his power, bankrupted the kingdom, broke the spirit of the people, lived for pleasure, disdained the English, shamed the Church, and brought from France singers and poets to spread his fame and glory. No mention is made of these crimes, however, during the mob's attack. It suffices to have cross-dressed to raise such ire and deserve such abuse.

The case of Richard, his treatment at the hands of his contemporaries and of medieval historians today, is much more than an arcane footnote or subject for specialists' squabbling. Richard, and William Rufus before him, both challenged their age's insistence on heterosexual pairing (one female or woman-like man and one male) and reinforce it (since neither is ever associated with the feminine, they cannot therefore have been sodomites). As Lavinia's mother warns her daughter in the contemporary romance of *Eneas*, just because a man marries does not mean that he is not a sodomite. The worst kind marry, then cheat, sometimes using the wives as bait. Her words go unheeded at the romance's end and do not seem to have penetrated even today's uneasy insistence on clear demarcations between the homo and heterosexual.

To take just one example from our own chronicles of actuality, contemporary cinema: Brad Pitt and Edward Norton in *The Fight Club*.¹³⁰ Brad plays the Richard Lionheart type – the super man, the warrior, the charismatic leader; Edward is Philippe Auguste – the wimp with ambitions. They live together, think as one, go from being reluctant allies to dark enemies in a screenplay that the *Nouvel Observateur* called a fascistic gay fantasy.¹³¹ But the film attempts to stem the association with homoeroticism by claiming Brad/Richard cannot be gay because he has sex with women, albeit only when Edward/Philippe is listening at the door. And Edward cannot be gay because he takes up with a woman himself once Brad/Richard has disappeared, albeit the same woman whom he shared (as voyeur) with Brad/Richard.

This labyrinth, in which all paths lead to Brad/Richard, is supposed to convince us that this is a heterosexual narrative; that only the pervert will see in Edward/Philippe's personality schism an element of homophobic self-hatred. No "evidence" therefore: not "effeminate"; violent sex with women; an ennobling commitment to a higher cause. Can these boys be anything but heterosexual with these credentials? This kind of thinking unfortunately turns the history of sexuality into the pseudo-history of heterosexuality and Richard Lionheart becomes just another role model for paramilitary youth. The fatal association between effeminacy and sodomy continues to serve as a blinder to historical inquiry and fosters a model of masculinity based on paranoia and, paradoxically, exclusively male bonding. Claiming Richard as a heterosexual is like claiming that there are no gays in the US military because they do not "tell." Lack of evidence can be a cover for not knowing how, rather than where, to look behind the blinders of ideological fantasies, with monolithic heterosexuality as the inevitable default setting.

PART II

Confronting sodomy

Making Perceval: double-binding and *sièges périlleux*

The disciplines function increasingly as techniques for making useful individuals. Hence their emergence from a marginal position on the confines of society, . . . [their] detachment from the forms of exclusion or expiation, confinement or retreat . . . their kinship with religious regularities and enclosures.¹

The community . . . can only maintain itself by suppressing this spirit of individualism, and, because it is an essential moment, all the same creates it and, moreover, creates it by its repressive attitude towards it as a hostile principle. However, this principle, being merely evil and futile in its separation from the universal end, would be quite ineffectual if the community itself did not recognize the power of youth (the manhood which, while immature, still stands within the sphere of individuality), as the power of the whole. For the community is a nation, is itself an individuality, and essentially is only such for itself by other individualities being for it, by excluding them from itself and knowing itself to be independent of them.²

When and why do men obey? Upon what inner justifications and upon what external means does this domination rest?³

At a key moment in Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation de Perceval*, it is announced to King Arthur that his court sits atop an infernal abyss in which knights who love "young men more than young ladies" are consumed by flames. His first reaction to this news is to turn and address his assembled court in the following terms:

Cil qui sont entechié / De si tres orrible pechié / Pueent estre tot
esmari, / Je meïsmes m'en esmari / Quant j'en oï ore parler. / Honis

sera au par aler / qui en tel pechié sera pris, / De mal fu soit ses cors
espris.⁴ (ll. 1589–1596)

[Those who are stained with such a horrible sin might well be stunned. I myself was when I just heard about it. Anyone who dies in such a state of sin will be disgraced when he meets his end. Let the body of anyone who cares about such pleasures be devoured by an evil flame.]

Arthur's discourse falls into the distinct category that Curtius called over fifty years ago the "sodomy topos" and which involves an accusation of sodomy directed against an otherwise respected knight by a woman seeking revenge.⁵ Gerbert de Montreuil's variation on this topos is notable in that it does not conform to the earlier, influential models of the *Roman d'Eneas* (1160) and Marie de France's *Lanval*, or the later appearances of the topos in the *Histoire de Gille de Chyn* and the *Roman de Silence*.⁶ The accusation is not made by a woman, stricken in her pride, whose word cannot be trusted, but by a king; and the charges do not necessarily turn out to be unfounded, as they do invariably in the other examples. The words are not addressed to just one individual but to a group of knights; even, one could argue, to the institution of Arthurian knighthood itself. And, lastly, the text actually straddles two highly charged topoi that were both instrumental, at least in romance texts, in separating the men from the boys, the heroically masculine from its unworthy admirers – women, Jews, sodomites, and knights who do not make the grade. In Gerbert's text the accusation of sodomy is linked with the topos of the *siège périlleux*, or perilous seat. In this chapter I will examine just how astute and logical that linking is and how, once conjoined, these two means of operating exclusion underwrote a discourse of elite masculinity that was, and continues to be, the linchpin of patriarchy. I will first discuss Perceval as a masculine icon as a way of establishing the close connection between the inculcation of a sacrificial masculine identity within social persecutory mechanisms, then return to the link with Gerbert's *siège périlleux*.

PERCEVAL: MAKING MEN

In his first appearance in Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du graal*, Perceval instantly became the unwitting emblem of Christian knighthood.⁷

Hardly a likely candidate to embody such an impossibly vague and somewhat pretentious concept, it took a series of different authors another 60,000 lines to round out the tale and impose some sort of sense. The *First Continuation*, which was composed very shortly after Chrétien's romance was abandoned, takes up the adventures of Gauvain right where Chrétien had left him. In this tale, Gauvain completely dominates the narrative with Perceval himself making only a brief appearance. The *Second Continuation* of Wauchier and those of Manessier and Gerbert (the latter dating from c. 1220–1230) deal with both knights, though it is clearly Perceval's quest that remains the focus of both knights' adventures. The *Roman du graal*, though attributed in the text to Robert de Boron, is in fact a prose rendition of the earlier versified *Roman de l'Estoire dou graal*. The former is usually attributed to the Pseudo-Robert de Boron and the latter to Robert himself. In these works, the origin of the Grail is traced back to Joseph of Arimathea and, through his progeny, to England. These texts, and the Vulgate cycle which depend upon them, sanctify the Grail (now referred to as the "Holy Grail") as a Christian icon in a way that Chrétien and the *Continuations* do not.⁸

The unfinished nature of Chrétien's romance was undoubtedly a spur to those who wrote in his wake, but they were surely inspired as well by the strangely allusive, not quite allegorical, proto-revelatory quality of what he left behind, qualities which invited others to find in it what they were seeking and to take it in new directions. Despite the enormous amount of scholarship that has appeared on the *Conte du graal* and its successors, no one reading has emerged as the standard against which all others are measured. For some it is a tale of spiritual quest: Perceval is the Christian soul, marked with original sin, who seeks to redeem his imperfection through service and self-abnegation. For others it is one of the following: a misinterpreted Celtic tale; a Lacanian allegory of identity formation; an exposition and condemnation of the violence and vengeance that lies just behind chivalric rhetoric; the remnant of an ancient vegetation cult; or an allegory of the voyage to archetypal masculinity.⁹

My intent here is to focus on Perceval as an individual subject – not as an allegorized everyman forging a masculine identity through submission to the cultural fantasy of knighthood, as in some of the more idealizing and "New Age" readings. Instead, I will argue that

Perceval is subjected to a discourse of elite masculinity into which men are interpellated so as to keep them striving toward an ideologically constructed ideal, an ideal which sets their desires and is, from the outset, unattainable. The particular form of elite masculinity that we find in the *Conte du graal* is so completely naturalized by ideology that even in contemporary critical commentary it passes unmentioned. It is assumed that Perceval is indeed guilty of something, that he must atone for his sins, that his service to humanity is voluntary, that his quest is spiritual. The knights he defeats in battle are less pretentious in their evaluations of Perceval: when they describe him it is almost invariably as the best knight in the world – one of them, only better. Only exceptionally do his adversaries recognize that his greatness derives from some previously ordained ontological status as savior. There is, in fact, a good deal of slippage within the romances between Perceval's status as warrior and mystic, as if physical strength were already a sign of a semi-divine status; and this slippage is symptomatic of a broader inability or refusal to distinguish between the Christian and the chivalric. The authors of these tales want us to believe that Perceval's chivalric greatness is an effect of his status as sacred knight but they never really explain the necessary connection between his amazing physical prowess and his relation with God.

Perceval is a curious choice for savior, not least because he seems to have very little personal relation with his God. Most, if not all, communication between them is indirect. It is up to those around him to keep him informed as to how he has displeased this God. The purported signals from beyond which tell him how to proceed with his quest could just as easily have their source in the demonic or fairy world. When his amazing prowess is discussed, it is generally attributed to his good genes and knightly training; God's role or investment in the distribution of talent and character is never clearly delineated. Thus the romances slip continually from the register of the sacred into the more mundane register of epic warrior exploits. In Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation*, for example, when the knight Faradien has been defeated, one might expect that he would realize that the force against which he has fought is somehow more than human, that his unexpected defeat can only be a sign of divine favor for his rival or of his own moral failing. We wait for some appropriately moral proclamation such as "I will never do wrong

again”; “I am converted”; “I will fight for the right”; “I was wrong.” Instead, he remains firmly in the chivalric register, proclaiming only that Perceval surpasses all other knights of the Round Table in prowess. Nor does Perceval impose upon his adversaries immediate confession, a visit to the church, or a good deed, as one might expect, given the overall argument of the later romances. Instead, he sends them on to King Arthur for what contemporary prison officials call rehabilitation, so that they might better serve the King’s cause.

None of this is surprising unless we persist in seeing the *Conte du graal* and the subsequent romances as sacred allegory. It is not, at least at this early stage in its development, and Perceval is more comprehensible as a victim of the cultural forces for whom he believes he is working than as their sacred spokesman. René Girard has written that a sacrificial myth is simply the version of truth told by the victor: Oedipus is guilty because we are told he is guilty and we believe what we are told against all our better instincts. Can sin be the cause of natural disasters and are sinners who are unaware of their transgression still held to be guilty?¹⁰ Can the blame for a drought or the collapse of social order really be attributed to one individual, as they are in the case of Perceval? The more one reads the *Conte du graal*, the more it looks like a classic sacrificial myth: economic collapse is followed by social disorder and a plague of violence; one man alone, a virtual orphan, is blamed for the disasters and ordered to redeem the collective through his sacrifice. His task is impossible and he will fail; but once murdered or banished, he will return as a sacred figure.¹¹ The Grail romances, at least in a selective reading, offer a truncated version of that scenario.

In Chrétien’s originary tale, we meet a young man who is offered actualization of the self, chivalric renown, riches, glory, eternal salvation, and a family reunion, i.e. everything that he thinks he desires, in return for sacrificing his time and immediate pleasures to a higher goal that he clearly does not understand. That goal is to find again the Fisher King and ask him to explain the apparitions of grail and lance once witnessed in his castle. If he can accomplish that one goal then all of these benefits will be his. He learns only as he travels through the *gaste terre*, however, that all that had once been promised him as the expected recompense of an exemplary knight is, in fact, dependent on his curing the Fisher King of his mysterious thigh wound, a clear metaphor for sin and sexual

dysfunction. When Perceval's will or talents falter, and he appears for however brief a time to be unable to perform the task for which he has been drafted, a number of different arguments are deployed by both his Arthurian and Grail mentors to encourage, or rather, coerce him to persist. These include the suggestion: (1) that he has been chosen for his task in fulfillment of a prophecy; (2) that it is some defect within himself that, despite his mystical calling, prevents him from reaching his true potential; and (3) that the path outlined by his elders will solve the mystery of his origins and lead to familial reconciliation and world peace.

Perceval, like Plato's *pharmakon* and Girard's scapegoat, is thus credited with being both the source of social malfunction (it is revealed by his mysterious cousin that he is of the Fisher King's family), implicated in their cycles of violence/vengeance (his brothers and father have already perished), and guilty by association of their crimes. Moreover, he is the potential savior of collective unity (as the one whose death/access to the mysteries could reinstate peace).¹² Despite the contention that the Grail can deliver brotherhood, an active economy, sexual potency, and cultural identity, the object itself is left shrouded in mystery.¹³ Only those close to it, or to the family to whom it is linked, seem to know what it means. In their case, it is therefore not an answer they seek but a question. They demand simply that someone else be forced to learn and take responsibility for what they already know and to signify that willingness, however unwitting, verbally. Thus, the grail is clearly an object of fantasy; it functions like the *objet a* in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory or the McGuffin in Alfred Hitchcock's films. It is an imaginary object which determines meaning through its presence or absence, deferral and displacement. It has no power in and of itself and its ultimate significance is, and can only ever be, veiled. It "means" only as a function of its relation with those who attribute value to it; it is their gaze which empowers it. They, in turn, acquire power and meaning through their positioning with regard to it: to being, or claiming to be, positioned within its gaze. The knights of the Round Table are intensely mimetic performers: they identify with one another, compete with and desire each other's desires, through the intermediary of the object at the center of their collective gaze. The object gains in significance as it becomes the mirror or screen onto which desires are projected and gazes meet.

So Perceval sets out on a quest for something whose value is determined by the desires of the people around him: people who claim once to have had it, but lost it. It is a quest whose objective and path are predetermined for him by those who always know more and better than he does, and who reveal their secrets, when at all, in the smallest of doses and in coded language.¹⁴ The importance of secrets cannot be over-emphasized in this romance. Perceval's ignorance of the most basic information about his family identity and the culture around him are explained away with reference to his age (adolescent), ethnicity (Welsh), and seclusion in the forest, and it is this proliferation of secrets, including the identity of the grail, which motivates the entire quest. The Waste Land through which Perceval travels could thus be compared to the panopticon discussed by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. The young knight is tracked and watched; information is dispensed only insofar as its dissemination enhances the control of those who observe. The text is therefore studded with double-binds, aporias: for example, Perceval's quest has as its purported final goal the return to peace and prosperity, yet it is only through incessant fighting that such a goal can be reached.¹⁵ Foucault's description of one of the key moments in the evolution of political subjection could be read as an allusion to the institution of chivalry, positioned as a hinge between two models of power:

If the economic take-off of the West began with the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital, it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection.¹⁶

The particular discipline that Foucault claims replaced these traditional, ritualized forms of violence "fixes . . . arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways . . ." ¹⁷ His explanation for the spread of such disciplines involves the gradual move from enclosed institutions on the confines of society (religious institutions, military groups) to the application to the larger community of the techniques of discipline developed in those institutions. Thus, the random

and senseless violence of medieval knighthood would be transformed in the *Conte du graal* into a chivalric quest, an organized venture that borrows from spiritual and military discourse without entirely endorsing either. Chivalric knighthood might itself be seen as a manifestation of a new disciplinary regime:

One also sees the spread of disciplinary procedures, not in the form of enclosed institutions, but as centers of observation disseminated throughout the society. Religious groups and charity organizations had long played this role of “disciplining” the population. . . . In England, it was private religious groups that carried out, for a long time, the functions of social discipline; in France, although a part of this role remained in the hands of parish guilds or charity associations, another – and no doubt the most important part – was very soon taken over by the police apparatus.¹⁸

These disciplines have as one of their primary functions to create what Foucault called “useful individuals.”¹⁹ While these developments might normally be associated with the later Middle Ages, Foucault is clearly implicating an earlier period, the twelfth century, in which the Church was moving toward the internalization of monitoring techniques and increased ecclesiastical control over the private and domestic spheres.²⁰

This notion of knighthood itself as a sort of proto-police force is, however, problematized in the *Graal*: the disciplining knight is himself disciplined by the task, in keeping with Foucault’s notion of power. Perceval moves through the *blanche lande* and the forests of the *gaste terre* as if tracked at each turn by a superior force. As he travels, almost everyone he meets knows of him. They are aware of his quest and spare little time in letting him know that he has failed.²¹ In a sort of tangled hierarchy, that failure is not only the result of his quest, it is the cause of it. It is at the very heart of his ambiguous sin. He is thus called upon both to re-establish his reputation as best knight and to expiate his (original) sin, as if the two were inevitably linked. And all the while, he is watched and his wanderings are reported.

Foucault called the Panopticon a machine:

for dissociating the “see / being seen” dyad: in the peripheric ring one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower one sees everything without ever being seen. . . . He who is subjected to a field

of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own submission.²²

This move to assumption of responsibility for one's own subjection sounds like blaming the victim, yet it describes quite accurately the process by which Perceval is transformed from a young naïf who checks his every action against his mother's commandments to a more "mature" individual who has replaced the mother by an Other: an internalized sense of culpability that directs his quest.²³ What his sin might be is never quite clear and gives rise, once again, to considerable slippage. Initially we are told that it consists of having left his mother alone to suffer at his departure, and of not having returned to help her when he saw her faint from grief. That sin is then compounded by his forgetting to perform religious duties (confession, etc.) and, in later versions, of having engaged in sexual relations. In other words, the initiatory milestones celebrated in many cultures as the determining steps toward developing an individual, masculine identity (separation from the mother, ritualized sexual relations, adherence to new non-familial codes of comportment) are colored in such a way that all men are, like Perceval, "sinners" and therefore unable to complete the much-vaunted quest for the grail. Instead of acknowledging this impossibility, this double-bind, the disciplinarians in the tower – the elders, clans, the imagined gaze of the Other, as you will – exploit this paradox to enhance the appeal of the call to action. Men are urged to pit themselves against each other in a never-ending quest to be recognized as the finest knight of the land; the best is then identified and redeemed through rituals in which all are called and only one is chosen. It is significant that as the romances move away from Chrétien's material into new interpretations of the Grail, the question of Perceval's sin recedes in importance. Whereas in Chrétien it is up to Perceval to cure the Fisher King's (i.e., his uncle's) thigh/genital wound and thus restore the land, in the *Queste del saint graal* (1225–30) the association between the wounded King and the barren land is never mentioned. The quest has become entirely a matter of individual rather than familial redemption. And in *Perlesvaus* (first quarter of the thirteenth century), the barren land and maimed

King are the direct *result* of Perceval's failure, not a condition into which he was born or for which he could bear guilt only as part of a familial trace.²⁴

At times, the appeals to pursue the quest merge with the call to prove oneself in tournaments, contests of chivalric excellence, thereby suggesting that these are two concomitant paths, both leading to salvation. In the *Second Continuation*, for example, Perceval follows the advice of a mysteriously beautiful young woman on a white mule to head for the *Mont Dolerous*. There, she tells him, he will find a pillar built by Merlin for Utherpendragon after the birth of Arthur, the entire function of which is to determine the finest knight in the land. Later, Perceval is again told that to make it to the castle of the Fisher King he must prove himself the greatest knight alive by participating in a tournament at the *Chastel Orguellos* (l. 26194). Why is the connection between elite masculinity and spiritual excellence so closely knit that one strand cannot be separated from the other? At what point would absolute mastery of war and combat have become the essential attribute of the one man holy enough to learn the secrets of the grail? How many hermits, under such conditions, could ever hope to complete this pseudo-spiritual quest? As in a judicial duel, it is understood that only knights favored by God will succeed, but it is never clear to the reader that the winner is winning because of that added divine boost rather than through innate physical prowess. If strength and training are prerequisites to induction into sacred knighthood, then all but a few are excluded. Yet all knights are encouraged to enter the battle to make their name, and many will die for no higher aim than to be admitted to this elite class. Simon Gaunt sees this competitive spirit as particularly characteristic of romance as opposed to the *corps d'esprit* of the epic:

the eroticism of romance sets potential heroes against each other rather than binding them as companions or implacable enemies as epic does. If romance charts the regulation of heterosexual desire, desire is nevertheless essential to its structures since without it the comradeship of the battlefield might well prevail once again.²⁵

Desire, directed nominally toward females in romance, is in fact largely redirected through competitive interaction with other men, especially in the cycles of the Grail. These men all want the same things:

status, esteem and the possessions that go with it, including rich young women. It is astounding how often Perceval fights over the course of 60,000 lives and almost every encounter with another male involves an immediate threat. This is sometimes diverted upon recognition but more often leads either to death or the capture of the challenger and his subsequent submission to the court of King Arthur. These battles serve at least three ends: they direct the energies of men toward competition with other men, thus reinforcing patriarchal structure; they lead to the social and economic establishment of knights through acquisition of land and marriage; and they contribute indirectly to the success of King Arthur's own political ambitions, since almost every defeated knight is offered service to Arthur in lieu of prison, and all accept that option.

Gender is then inculcated not so much through opposition to femininity as through competition with other males.²⁶ If, in patriarchy, all identity is constructed in relation to the masculine, "within a masculine economy in relation to another model of the masculine," then imitation and resultant conflict (as in Girard's mimetic desire) would not only be constitutive of entry into the Lacanian Imaginary (formation of a self-image) but would function as well at the point of interpellation into the Symbolic Order (the Law) and continue to support the illusion of the unified subject within the Symbolic.²⁷ Perceval's initial misrecognition of the first knights he meets is a perfect illustration of this mirroring effect. Overwhelmed by the multicolored surface of their armor as it glistens in the sun, Perceval exclaims:

Ce sont ange que je voi ci. / Et voir or ai je mot pechié / Or ai je
molt mal exploitié / Qui dis que c'estoient deiable. / Ne me dist pas
ma mere fable, / Qui me dist que li ange sont / Les plus beles choses
qui sont / Fors Deu qui est plus bel que tuit . . . Ne vi je or / Les
plus beles choses qui sont, / Qui par la guaste forest vont? / Qu'il sont
plus bel, si con je cuist, / Que Dex ne que si enge tuit. . . . Mais molt
iroie volantiers / Au roi qui fait les chevaliers, / Et g'i erai, cui qu'il en
poist. (ll. 132–139, 364–368, 457–459)

[These are angels that I see here. . . . My mother wasn't kidding when she said that angels are the most beautiful things that exist, except for God, who is more beautiful than all things. . . . Didn't I just see the most beautiful things in the world moving through the *gaste forest*

[Wasted Forest]? I think they are more beautiful than God and all his angels . . . I would really like to go to the king who makes men knights, and go I will, I don't care who objects.]

Perceval has seen his ego ideal and henceforth carries it within him as the image of himself. In Lacan's terminology, the ego ideal is "the signifier operating as ideal, an internalized plan of the law, the guide governing the subject's position in the symbolic order, and hence anticipates secondary (Oedipal) identification, or is a product of that identification."²⁸ This image is an object of desire which continues to govern Perceval's relation to the Law long after he himself becomes a knight.²⁹ In this sense it is not limited to an imaginary identification but serves as well a disciplinary function in the symbolic order. It is reinforced every time that he engages in competitive battles for supremacy. Violent mimetism is the rule of chivalry and its power to blind and seduce is most in evidence in those scenes of *méconnaissance* in which Arthurian knights, friends, and brothers battle each other almost to death before realizing who they are.³⁰ Any notion of individuality is subsumed within the intense, primary rivalry of gender identification and the need to re-establish that identity through combat.

WOMEN UNDER CHIVALRY

In support of Gaunt's point that gender within patriarchy is constructed always in relation to a notion of the masculine, the women who appear in the *Roman du graal* and the *Continuations*, even when allowed a voice and a diegetic role, are depicted in terms of their inclusion within, or opposition to, the parameters of patriarchy. Even in the all-female Castle of the Maidens, where the women appear to be self-sufficient and happy amongst themselves, they are defined in relation to what they have rejected or cannot have.³¹ Women in the Grail texts fall generally into the categories of: persecuted damsel in distress, rape victim, devil in disguise, other-worldly fairy, or ugly messenger – and often these roles overlap. The portrait of woman is not entirely negative, though, despite the generally misogynistic slant. These romances have their share of demonic female seductresses, and evil messengers from beyond (e.g.,

ll. 2516–2586; 12432–12500), but Perceval also defends women, in Gerbert de Montreuil's text, for having played a role in redemption:

Vilains est et de mal affaire / Li hom qui feme deshonoieure: / Par feme fut dedens une cure / Recovrez toz li biens del mont; / Feme fu le premerain pont / Par cui Dieux en enfer passa, / Qui toz ses amis respassa / D'infer et traist for de la porte: / Par li fu la mors d'infer morte, / Ki fame fait lait ne hontage, / Li meïsmes fait son damage. (7230–7240)

[Wicked and corrupt is the man who dishonors a woman: it was through a woman that all the goods of the world were recovered; a woman was the first bridge by which God entered into hell and brought back with him through those gates all his friends: through him was the bite of hell destroyed; he who mistreats or brings shame upon a woman brings upon himself his own ruin.]

Many of the mistreated women in the romance defend themselves against their male aggressors in similarly eloquent terms. One in particular, defending her right to marry the man who has seduced her with false promises, speaks for a whole class of *pastourelle* women when she says:

Si me requist son bon a faire, / Et je qui fui de sot affaire / Li respondi que je feroie / Son bon et tot li sofferroie, / Mais qu'il me fianchast sa foi / Que loialement en bone foi / M'espoureroit en loialté. / Li fols, plains de desloiauté, / Me fiancha lués de sa main / Qu'il m'espoureroit l'endemain. / Sor sa fiance l'en creï / Et il a moi tant acreï / Qu'il prist cele nuit tant del mien / Qu'il ne me puet rendre por rien. . . . Ore ai fait, ce m'est vis, le salt / Que sote fait qui ne se garde, / Qui par fol sens son cors escarde. / Malvaisement me sui gardee, / Vilainement sui escardee. (ll. 1775–1794)

[So he asked me do what he wanted and I, who was foolish and inexperienced, said that I would do what he wanted and let him have his way with me but that he should first give me his word that he would truthfully, in all good faith, marry me. That lying cheat, he promised me right then and there with a sign of his hand that he would marry me the next day. I believed his promise and that night he took a loan from me that he can never in any way repay. . . . Now I realize that I jumped into something, like a fool who isn't looking

out for her own interest, who gives up the wholeness of her body without thinking. I did not look out for myself, now I find myself discarded!]

Perceval goes to this woman's defense and she ends up getting the marriage she bargained for, but her case is unusual. Most women are in the opposite position of being forced to marry men they despise. Defended or chastised, the women are nonetheless entirely determined, within the economy of these romances, by how men treat them. Their individuality or their problems are only interesting insofar as they further or break off their relations with men.

As Kathryn Gravdal recognized, romance "by its definition, must *create* the threat of rape," and the threat of rape is indeed omnipresent in these Grail romances.³² Perceval himself is uncomfortably associated with a potential rape in his very first meeting with a woman alone:

La pucele de paor tramble / Por le vallet qui fols li samble

...

Mais dedesfance mestier n'i ot, / Que li vallez tot de randon / La
baissa, vosist ele o non, / Vint foiz, si con li contes dit. (ll. 651–652;
670–673)

[The young woman trembled with fear over this young man who seemed crazy . . . but she didn't need to defend herself because he suddenly kissed her seven times, whether she wanted it or not, as the story goes.]

Raped or not, the woman is then doubly punished in that her lover believes not only that she had sexual relations with the youth but that she participated willingly. Since all women are slaves to physical pleasure, according to this knight, l'Orgueilleux de la Lande, men cannot be blamed for taking advantage of a woman even when she says "no":

Et s'il baissa maugré suen, / N'en fist il après tot son buen? / Oïl, ce
ne creroit ja nus / Qu'il le baisast sanz faire plus, / Que l'une chose
l'autre attrait. / Qui baisse fame et plus n'i fait, / Des qu'il sont sol a
sol andui, / Don cuit je qu'il remaint an lui. / Fame qui sa bouche
abandone / Lo soreplus molt de legier done, / S'est qui a certes i
entande. / Et bien soit qu'ele se desfande, / Si set en bien sanz nul
redot / Que feme velt vaincre partot / Fors qu'en cele mellee soele /
Qu'ele tient home par la goele, / Si esgratine et mort et tue, / Si vodroit

ele estre vaincue. / Et se desfant et si li tarde. / Tant est de l'ostreier
coarde, / Ainz velt qu' a force l'en li face, / Puis si n'en a ne gré ne
grace. / Por ce cuit je qu'il jut a li. (ll. 3789–3811)

[And if he did kiss her against her will, didn't he then have his way with her? Yes, he did – no one would believe that he just kissed her without going further, for one thing follows upon the other. Anyone who kisses a woman and does no more, when they are alone together – why, it can only be because he's slow on the draw. A woman who offers her mouth gives up the rest very easily if the other person puts his mind to it. And even if she does defend herself, it is common knowledge that a woman wants to win by any means except for that one battle in which she grabs a man by the throat, scratches, bites and kills him; and that's precisely when she wants to be conquered. So she defends herself and yet she wants it, so it's time to call her bluff for what she wants is to be raped/to be taken by force. Then she can pretend she had no say in it and has no need to acknowledge what happened. And that's why I think he had it off with her.]

L'Orgueilleux's argument does allow that a man might choose not to continue to press his advantage but only if he holds back within himself ("il remaint en lui" [l. 3862]). This little aside could be taken as an admission that all men are not entirely enslaved by bodily desire, as women are, or that all men are not necessarily heterosexual. None of the unworthy knights that Perceval meets would seem to fall into those categories, however. They are completely taken with their own power, define themselves as knights in relation to that power to control, and take full advantage of any opportunity to exert that power over any victim, especially women. Thus, even in scenes where rape is not explicitly described, scenes in which knights lead women around the countryside half-dressed and undernourished, it is implicit. Here is one typical scene from Manessier's *Continuation*:

Et Sagremor. . . .

Si vit un gué grant et parfont. / De l'autre part de l'eve font / Dui
chevalier une foilie. Une pucelle despoillie / El milieu de la loje sist, /
A qui lor estre pas ne sist. La pucelle fu an chemise / Et uns des
chevaliers l'a mise / Trestoute estandue an un lit, / Que faire an voloit
son delit. / Mais la pucelle crie et pleure, / Et molt maudit le jor et
l'eure / Qu'elle de sa mere fu nee . . . Un chevalier tint la meschine /

Descouverte, que la poitrine / Blanche et nue li paroît toute. (Manessier, *The Third Continuation*, ll. 34735–34757)

[And Sagremor saw a large and deep abyss on the other side of which two knights were doing something terrible. A very young woman was sitting, undressed, in the middle of their hut among the trees, and did not like being there. She was in her underclothing and one of the knights lay her down flat on a bed so that he could have his way with her. But the girl screamed and cried and cursed the day that she was born of her mother. . . . One knight held the girl down with the clothing undone, so that from the waist up she was completely nude and so white.]

And here are several others, all from Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation*, in which the rape motif is evoked to different degrees. Though some turn out to be lies, ploys used by treacherous women to undermine Perceval's quest, one gets the impression that such treatment of women is the rule rather than the exception:

- l. 7158: Perceval comes upon a knight beating a woman with a heavy club. She cries out that she has done no wrong; she simply has refused to be his "amie." He has abducted her from her own lover and she now vows never to sleep with him of her own accord. She will kill herself first or let herself be killed. He, meanwhile, is twisting her arms, breaking her bones, and pulling her along by the hair. By the time they reach a chapel where the knight demands that the resident hermit perform a wedding ceremony, the woman's body is covered with blood.
- l. 9004: The *pucelle au cercle d'or*'s lover has been killed by the knight with the dragon shield. He is now attacking her castle and will abduct her and force her to be his lover. As he has killed all her possible defenders, she awaits his arrival and swears never to give in to his desires. She will dress forever with her clothing on backwards as a sign of her mourning.
- l. 15064: A young woman (who is actually a treacherous liar) is naked in a fountain. Her lover, in a jealous rage over the mention of Perceval, has stripped her and made her sit in the fountain, never to leave it until saved by her supposed hero, Perceval.

- l. 15332: A young woman (another liar) has been abducted by two knights on horseback. When they arrive at their destination, they put her down on the ground and ask her to let them have their way with her. She replies that she would rather be torn to pieces than give in to them. When two other knights come upon the scene, they battle with her abductors to defend her.

The regularity with which these scenes appear, along with what might be called the rare, legitimate love scenes, manage to inject a presumption of heterosexuality, thereby distinguishing them from the world of epic in which emotional bonds are mainly between men. The romances totally fail, however, to introduce heterosexual relations in any positive way. If anything, the *Continuations* work to reinforce negative attitudes toward sexuality in general. Men behave badly, raping women and fighting with every other man they meet. There is the suggestion, of course, that it is only unworthy knights who rape, while Arthurian knights fulfill their pledge to protect women; but it is hard to say whether that is actually the case, especially when these same rapists are, upon defeat, recruited to serve in the Arthurian forces. Knights of the Round Table, on the other hand, with the possible exception of Gauvain, are sexual only to the extent that they respond, as does Perceval, to others' initiative. Their sympathy for the plight of women and their success in combating rapists, thieves, and aggressors of all sorts make them desirable targets for women whose entire diegetic function is to buttress the reputation of our heroes by serving as victims of unscrupulous foes. These women defend their lands by attracting potential husbands/defenders with promises of sex and titles. Blanche fleur presents an emblematic case in the *Roman du graal*. When Perceval meets her she is noble but poor, victimized, half-dressed, and under the relentless attack of Clamadeu des Iles. On his very first night in her castle, Perceval is asleep in bed when his hostess comes to him saying:

Por Dé vos pri et por son fil / Que vos ne m'an aiez plus vil / De ce
que je sui ci venue. / Por ce se je sui pres que nue / Je n'i pansai onques
folie / Ne malvoistié ne vilenie. (ll. 1941–1946)

[For God's sake and that of his son, I beg you not to think less of me
for having come. Just become I am almost naked does not mean that
I was having crazy, evil, or vulgar thoughts . . .]

Despite Blanchefleur's almost comical disclaimer, she and Perceval end up spending the night together: "Li uns lez l'autre, boche a boche" (l. 2023). Blanchefleur is, on one level at least, a representation of the sexually confident and demanding woman, typical of most of the women who play a part in love scenes in these Celtic-inspired romances. Young and beautiful heiresses, at least according to these male authors, experience and express desire for sex and intimacy as part of a larger strategy of seeking defenders against the assaults of ravaging knights. Their world has been laid to waste not by the supposed sins of Perceval and his family, but by the very human forces of unrestrained chivalric aggression. Such marauding behavior is so common among knights that it is even tempting to see Perceval's "sin" as one of having participated in that cycle of violence. The women's behavior, understandable and even commendable, nonetheless reinforces misogynistic theological discourse which sees woman as the corrupter of man and *fabliaux* portraits of women as sexual predators and slaves to pleasure.³³

Sex therefore plays a role in keeping the story moving, in creating promises and obligations that knights must then fulfill. The candor with which sexual acts are described would indicate that the authors, despite their championing of virginity as the ultimate state of perfection, are also careful to insist upon the joys of heterosexual union. Yet they seem to be pulled in two directions. On the one hand, they condemn male aggression toward women and all non-reproductive sex, including sex between men (see below); on the other, they champion male aggression in every context, provided that it serves the aims of Arthurian Christianity, and celebrate heterosexuality provided that the initiative for beginning sexual relations comes from the woman.³⁴ In fact, a knight such as Perceval should not properly be called heterosexual at all, at least not if we consider some of the modern connotations that were born with courtly literature. Heterosexuality implies not only the consummation of sexual relations with a person of the opposite sex but includes as well an ordering of desire that includes the chase and wooing of that partner, as well as a whole set of ritualized subject positionings and rhetorical tropes. The appearance of the beautiful, barely clothed woman at the bedside of the triumphant knight is a trope that in the Grail romances side-steps male responsibility for having demanded or even desired sex. Thus Perceval's reaction to Blanchefleur's appearance

at his bedside is surprise, but when he invites her to join him and spend the night he becomes a willing participant. The next day, as he is about to go forth into battle with the wicked Enguigeron, he asks that she give him her love as a recompense for his efforts. Later, after his victory over Enguigeron, Perceval is led immediately to Blanchefleur's bedroom by the lady herself, where, instead of eating and drinking, they hug and kiss, lie around, and exchange sweet words ("Jüent et baisent at acolent / Et debonairement parolent" [ll. 2301–2302]). When Perceval departs, after defeating Clamadeu as well, it is understood that he will return to take possession of her lands.³⁵ It is not even clear that Perceval leaves the castle having had sex with Blanchefleur, never mind that he is now a full-fledged heterosexual, and many earlier critics have claimed that, in fact, Perceval never engages in any sexual relations throughout the romance. Though I do not agree with that assessment and have trouble imagining why it seems so important, I would have to say that Perceval's sexual interludes suggest that he plays a largely passive role in the proceedings. In a scene from the *Second Continuation* of Wauchier de Denain, obviously inspired by the scene just discussed, Perceval is visited in his bed at the Castle of the Chessboard by a young woman who had earlier promised herself to him:

Percevaux pas ne s'andormi / Si tost comne faire soloit; / A la demoiselle pansoit, / Qui de biauté resambloit fee. / Que qu'il estoit an sa pansee, / Vint elle au lit, si se coucha / Et vers lui sa foi aquita, / Tot si com il ot devisé / Et com li ot acreanté, / S'an lui ne remest par folie. / Tote celle nuit anuitie / Ont andui ansamble geü. (ll. 28128–28139)

[Perceval did not fall asleep as quickly as usual; he was thinking of the demoiselle who in her beauty resembled a fairy. While he was thinking of her, she came to his bed, got in, and kept her word. Just as she had planned and promised, she did not put him off out of folly. All that night, hour by hour, they lay together . . .]

The ambivalence we find in this passage resides in the fact that we never know whether any sex takes place, whether sex with a fairy is really sex, or whether Perceval or the fairy are doing what they are doing for any reason other than to fulfill a promise. In Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation*, we first see Perceval turning down the offer of a *pucelle* to spend the night with him as thanks for his defense of their realm.

Despite the fact that “li cors li fremist et li membre” (his body and limbs trembled [ll. 631–632]) at the offer, he tells her that he must decline for fear that “tro feroie grant pechié / Se je avoie despechié / Vo pucelage ne le mien” (I would be committing a grave sin if I despoiled your virginity or my own [ll. 651–653]). When she has departed, Perceval turns his thoughts immediately to the grail as a way of sublimating his anxiety but also as a way of admitting that the grail is itself as an object of desire, not always easily distinguished from a sexual register (“torne et retourne, / Au Graal son pensé atorne” [ll. 667–668]).

When later, in the same *Continuation*, Gerbert returns to Chrétien’s original love story of Perceval and Blanchefleur, it is an anomalous account. After all, in the known versions of Chrétien, Wauchier de Denain, Manessier, and Gerbert, Perceval thinks only occasionally of Blanchefleur after their night together and then mostly in terms of his obligation *manquée*. But in Gerbert’s text, having been reminded yet again that it is his own imperfections and transgressions that have kept him from completing the quest, he comes to the realization that the sin in question must be his failure to have kept his promise to Blanchefleur:

Et ele m’ama de cuer fin / Et me dist que je la preïsse / Et de li ma
feme feïsse. / Et je li si en covent mis / Que je seroie ses amis / Et a
feme l’espouseroie, / Ne vers autre ne mesferoie. / Or m’en membre,
c’est li pechiez / Dont je quit plus estre entechiez. (ll. 5140–5148)

[And she loved me with a fine/true heart and told me I should take her and make her my wife. And I made a promise to her that I would marry her and would do nothing with anyone else that would betray that promise. Now I remember – this is the sin with which I think I am most stained.]

As usual, Perceval’s thinking is not quite straight, not surprising given that this is Gerbert’s version of the story. He is impelled to identify a failing within himself because he is told by everyone he meets that he has one. Instead of challenging that view, he adopts the image mirrored back to him and entertains an extended examination of conscience. This sounds like the dream of any panoptical disciplinarian: the tracking of Perceval’s travels is but the macrocosmic version of the microcosmic tracking that goes on in his own head. Acting as his own inquisitioner, he interrogates himself and lands on Blanchefleur as the key to his

failure, a person for whom he clearly feels affection but who seems not to have left an indelible impression. Even as he remembers his promise to her, he recalls that it was she who asked him to marry her, she who took the initiative and he who followed. His disappearance immediately after their love interlude and his subsequent lack of concern for what has become of her (apart from his reverie upon seeing blood on snow) do not seem to dampen his rising conviction that the serious sin he has committed must have been in her regard. This *prise de conscience* is suspect; it is not so much that guilt is born at that moment as that he has mastered his masters' inculpatory discourse, a true moment of subjection.

Blanchefleur is another story. Described as a *pucelle enamouree*, she spends one long soliloquy bemoaning Perceval's absence and her inability to live without him ("S'il eüst ausi son cuer mis / En moi con je ai mis en lui, / Il ne meïst pas en delui / Qu'il ne venist prochainement" [If he had placed his heart in me like I placed mine in him, he would delay no longer but return immediately] [ll. 6264–6267]). Gerbert runs through the physical, tell-tale signs of love in a young maiden and Blanchefleur fits the bill (her color changes, she grows timid, sighs a lot, etc. [ll. 6383–6390]). It is no surprise then that their reunion has the makings of an erotic fantasy even if, given what has preceded it, its climax is unexpected:

Au lit Percheval est venue / En chemise et en matel nue, / Sor l'esponde
s'est acoutee. / Perchevaus, qui l'ot escoutee / Venir, le prist entre ses
bras; / Pres de lui, par desoz les dras, / L'estraint et dolcement le baise. /
Molt est li uns de l'autre a aise: / De l'acoler et du baisier / Se puent
il bien aesier, / Car du sorplus n'i ot point. (ll. 6551–6562)

[She came to Perceval's bed wearing only a night-shirt and robe, with nothing on underneath, and leaned on the edge of the bed. When he heard her arrive, Perceval took her in his arms; close beside him, beneath the sheets, he hugs and kisses her sweetly. Both of them are very content just to be together: hugging and kissing keeps them satisfied for their lovemaking didn't go beyond that.]

This short scene does however prepare us for the wedding night that follows, when both parties vow spontaneously to maintain their chastity in marriage. Gerbert's choice of words in the following passage betrays

the ambivalence he feels about sex, power, and gender and his determination to offer a new and revised version of Perceval's sexual history to this point:

Et quant li lis porcernés fur / Et saigniés de crois et de fu / S'i ont
couchié, si con moi samble, / Perchevaus et la dame ensamble. / Si
se sont les gens departies / Et s'en vont en pluisors parties: / Et les
chambrieres s'en vont, / De lor dame pas paor n'ont / Qu'eles sevent
bien tot sanz faille / Que bien vaintra ceste bataille. / Ambedui jurent
bras a bras / Nu a nu, par desoz les dras. / Et Blancheflors fremist et
tramble, / Et il plus que feuille de tramble, / Car il ne sont mie asseür: /
N'i a celui qui n'ait peür / Que por le corporel delit / Ne perdent ce que
li eslit / Ont en la grant joie des ciels: / Garder se welent des perius /
D'enfer et de la grant torment. / Perchevaus sozpire et gaismente /
Qui tient Blancheflor acolee. / Cele, qui bien fu escollee / De tout bien,
de toute honour faire, / A parle come debonaire / Et come dame bien
aprise, / Car de l'amour Dieu est esprise. / Se dist: "Perchevaus, biaux
amis, / Or gardons ce que anemis / N'ait sor nous force ne pooir. /
Legiere chose est a savoir / Que chaastez est sainte chose, / Mais /
ensemnt come la rose / Sormonte autres flors de biautez, / Ausi passe
virginitez / Chasteé, ce sachiez de voir: / Et qui puet l'une et l'autre
avoir, / Sachiez toute honors l'avironne, / Et si en a double corone /
Devant Dieu en saint paradis." (ll. 6799–6839)

[And when the bed was made and they had made the sign of the cross [and fire] they got into bed, Perceval and the lady together, or so it seems to me. All the others left the room and went in different directions: the chambermaids went off with no fear for their lady for they knew without any doubt that she would win this battle. The two of them lie there, side by side, naked flesh touching naked flesh, under the sheets. And Blanchefleur shakes and trembles and Perceval does too, more than an aspen leaf, for they are not at ease: they are not like those others who have no fear that through bodily pleasures one can lose the heavenly joys of the saved: they want to be safe from the perils of hell and the great torment. Perceval sighs and moans as he holds Blanchefleur close to him. Blanchefleur, who was well instructed in the right way to do things and save honor, spoke up then like a well brought-up and intelligent woman who is overcome with her love of God, and she said: "Perceval, my beautiful friend, let's be careful not to let the enemy have any power over us. It is obvious that chastity is a sacred thing, but like the rose surpasses all other

flowers in beauty, virginity surpasses chastity, and this you should know as truth. Anyone who can have both of them is surrounded by all blessings and is doubly crowned before God in holy paradise.”]

This is a remarkable turn of events since even in Chrétien's version, to which Gerbert refers, Perceval and Blanchefleur seemed already to have experienced bodily delights, and Gerbert clearly knew Perceval's text very well.³⁶ Though both of them seem to have rethought their relationship, it is Blanchefleur whose decision is most surprising, given the description of her to this point as the archetypal woman in love. We should remember, though, her chambermaids' words as they left the nuptial bed: this is a battle that they know she will win. Whereas that metaphor usually refers to women's sexual appetite, and to battles that women win (gain pleasure) by losing (giving in), here it takes on a decidedly ironic cast since sexual fulfillment has been forsworn. Nonetheless, victory is indeed Blanchefleur's if it means keeping Perceval happy, indebted to her, willing to stay and offer his protection; and renunciation of sex was the key weapon. As for Perceval, given his apparent lack of commitment since their first meeting, the idea of a *mariage blanc* might have appealed to him enormously. There are, after all, only two justifications for marriage, according to Gerbert's narrator: procreation and the avoidance of sin.³⁷ Perceval needed marriage as a way to avoid falling prey to the next damsel who offered herself to him. Since he seems otherwise incapable of responding to his own desire and exists mainly as an icon for the enjoyment of others, marriage, providing that he can remember his vow, will offer a convenient excuse. Sexuality was central to the construction of sanctity in the Middle Ages but sanctity was often an element, as well, in the construction of sexuality.³⁸ It is through recourse to sacred proscriptions that Perceval is finally able to reject the passive promiscuity of Gauvain. As a sexual being, he is buffeted by competing discourses which inscribe him as monk, knight, hermit, or lord and defender of feudal rights, and all of these assume, at least nominally, heterosexual desire or its repression. As Perceval is asked either to perform or deny or sublimate these desires as the key to subjectivity, he seems like a frightened deer in the glare of the Other's gaze, saying only: "Make of me what you will." Marriage seems to offer him a modicum of safety.

Not so with Gauvain. If Perceval finally rejects heterosexuality, replacing it with chaste marriage, Gauvain embraces it.³⁹ Throughout the Grail romances, Gauvain leaves in his wake a trail of women who love him and to whom he has promised to return. When he fails to do so, he does not suffer the pangs of Perceval. He is not haunted by his failings and never interprets them as the sin holding him back from perfection. He, too, is accused in Chrétien's text of a crime, but not one of passivity or lack, as in Perceval's case. It is not that he did not do something that he learns only later that he should have done, but rather the more mundane (at least in chivalric terms) charge that he has killed a man whose family now demands revenge. That Gauvain does not at first remember this incident, yet is tracked like Perceval by his enemies, makes him also a victim of sorts. But the fact that no one "explains" to him his failings in spiritual terms leaves him free to pursue his own knightly agenda without waiting for signs of what to do next. His sexual encounters are not marked by the ambivalence we have noted when Perceval is involved. In a scene from the *Second Continuation*, for example, Gauvain, the Petit Chevalier and his sister, Tanree, are all seated on a bed in their castle (l. 29780). When the Chevalier leaves the room to prepare for battle, Gauvain and the sister immediately turn the topic to love. He wants to know whom she loves and she, of course, reveals that it is he (l. 29847). Lovemaking ensues and Gauvain ends up taking her virginity, but Wauchier de Denain is eager to assure us that this was not a rape:

Tant ont baisié et acollé / Que Gauvains la fleur an coilli; / Mais el
livre n'ai pas oï / Que fust maugré la damoiselle / Qu'elle perdi non
de pucelle, / Ainz le graa et molt li sist. / Se Gauvains force li feïst, /
Dont ne fust il mie cortois, / Mais antulles et mal sourdois. (ll. 29862–
29870)

[They kissed and hugged so much that Gauvain picked the flower [of her virginity]; but I never learned in the book that it was against the young lady's wishes that she lost the name of virgin; on the contrary she wanted it thus and was happy about it. If Gauvain had forced her, it would hardly have been courteous [courtly], more like shameful and disgraceful.]

The following night they again sleep together and enjoy each other thoroughly (ll. 29929–29935). When Gauvain leaves her behind the

next morning, he regrets only that he did not wake her to say good-bye! Even in Gerbert's *Continuation*, Gauvain has an adventure with a young woman whose father he has killed. Instead of killing her father's murderer, this young woman falls instantly in love with him, and proceeds to betray her brothers for his sake. Having just witnessed her brothers' attack on Gauvain, during which one brother is killed and the other maimed (Gauvain cuts off his hand), the young woman turns to Gauvain, impervious to the still-warm familial blood around them, and begs him to make love with her ("Ha! dols amis, or m'acolez!" [l. 12720]). She first has to bandage his wounds but then they lie together, "bouche a bouche, vis contre vis . . . dolcement embrachie" (mouth to mouth, face to face, . . . sweetly entwined in embrace [ll. 12740–12741]). Gerbert never back-pedals on Gauvain's encounters with women as he does with Perceval. They involve sex and pleasure with little or no guilt.

VICTIMIZATION

The terms of victimization that subtend the rhetoric of elite masculinity are already present and developed in Chrétien's text, but they receive further elaboration in the four continuations that appeared between c. 1200 and 1230. As we have seen, Perceval learns in *Le roman du graal* that he is a sinner, though it is never clear just what, other than youth, he is guilty of. He is a cipher, refashioned and redirected by messengers, hermits, and mysterious women who know far more about him than he knows himself. The unknown cousin he meets after his first stay with the Fisher King speaks for all of them when she says: "Je te conois mielz que tu moi / Et tu ne sez pas qui je sui" (I know you better than you know me and you do not even know who I am [ll. 3534–3535]). These agents from some omniscient realm (fairies, long-lost cousins, and uncles) are disciplinary agents, messengers from the Other, who intend to make of him a "useful individual" who will provide service to Church, court, and family. *Le conte* could thus also be read as an allegory of subject formation, hailed by agents of "state apparatuses" *avant la lettre*. Through interpellation into their discourse he is assigned a name, family history, and purpose in life.⁴⁰ *Perceval li Gaulois* becomes, in the discourse of the demoiselle, *Percevaus li chaitis*, and the name is a function of his crimes (not asking the right questions, not turning back

to help his dying mother). When Perceval asks how she knows what she knows (“Ha! cosine, fait Percevaus / Se ce est voirz que dit m’avez / Dites moi commant lo savez!” [ll. 3550–3552]), he is told simply that he has always known her but does not recognize her. Recognition and misrecognition, secrets and lies, are central to the romance tradition but are never more marked than in the *Conte du graal*. Through elaborate charades of identification, claims of consanguinity, and acceptance of lack, the complicity of Perceval is ensured. It is not that what happens to Perceval is exceptional; better to say that his is an exemplary case, exaggerated so as to hook readers and interpellate them in turn. Perceval is naive beyond the norm: he displays so little intellectual curiosity; listens so poorly; reacts so impulsively – yet the process of socialization by which he becomes a disciplinary subject is instantly recognizable and naturalized.

His is a subjectivity shaped around him rather than by him; his agency part of an ideological illusion. In the absence of his true father, the paternal voice is omnipresent, ventriloquized through everyone who tells him he is a sinner and savior. Their investment in his quest might be compared to, but goes beyond, the attachment people feel for a military or athletic hero.⁴¹ Only in a celebrity culture like our own, in which the print media purvey the most insignificant details of private life, could we imagine these people knowing what they know. One has the feeling that they devour any information about him because they expect him either to save them through his sacrifice or damn them with his sin. Thus they follow along, directing him with their observations and criticisms.

At the very beginning of Wauchier de Denain’s *Continuation*, called the second but actually the first after Chrétien’s romance to concentrate on Perceval rather than Gauvain, Perceval is entering a forest after having spent two days without food or drink, “anclins, famelleus et pensis” (worn out, starving, and worried [MS A, l. 9473]). He finds himself at a crossroad and asks a hunter which way to go. The hunter refuses to speak to him, saying:

“Je ne vos salu mie, / Cheitis! que par vostre folie / Avez mis tantes
genz a mal. / Jamés an nule cort roial / N’avroiz an vostre vie enor, /
Qu’a la cort le Roi Pescheor / Fustes, si n’anqueïstes mie / Les segroiz.
Ce fu granz folie, / Que la lance sainnier veïstes / Devant vos, et si

Making Perceval: double-binding and sièges périlleux

n'aqueïstes / Por quele acheïson el sainnoit, / Ne del Graal ou il aloit. /
Se vos l'eüssiez demandé, / Cest regne eüssiez restoré, / Et mis an joie et
an leesce / Ces qui or sont an grant tristece, / Pechiez vos i a fet faillir, /
Molt par vos an devez haïr, / Fuiez vos de ma compaignie, / Dolereus,
et ne tenez mie / Ceste voie. Tornez aïllors, car ce seroit vostre dolors; /
Alez arriere maintenant. / Veez lez escloz ci devant / D'un cheval a
envers ferrei. / S'il vos avoient tant meneri / Que trovesiez le cor
pandu / As portal, s'avriez perdu / Vostre pris, et sanz nule faille /
N'an torneriez sanz bataille." / Atant s'an part delivrement. / Et
Perceval plus n'i atant, / Et dit: "La ou ge cuit morir / Irai, ne m'an
puet nus tenir, / Quant tex honte m'est avenue / Que par tot le mont
est seüe." / Einsi chevalche molte iriez. (MS A, ll. 9493–9529)

["I will not salute you, you miserable man. For through your madness you brought so many people to ruin. Never in any royal court will you find honor in your lifetime for you were at the court of the Fisher King and never asked about the secrets. That was a crazy thing to do: you saw the lance that bleeds right in front of you and you never asked why it was bleeding. Nor did you ask where the Graal was going. If only you had asked, this kingdom would have been restored and happiness and joy would have returned to those who are now in a state of great sadness. It was sin that made you fail; you should really hate yourself. Get away from me, you poor wretch, and if you come this way you'll regret it. Go some other way, I'm warning you. Turn back now. Do you see the hoof prints here of a horse that was shod backwards? If you got so far that you found the horn hung on the gate you would lose your reputation, and would never be able to go back without a battle." Then he got up and left. Perceval did not wait a second longer, saying: "I'll go to the place where I think I'll die for I cannot take it any longer – such shame has come over me now that it's known all over the world." And so he took off, very upset.]

The hunter is vehement in his condemnation but he does offer an accurate description of Perceval's plight. Everyone he meets knows about his sins and failures and he can never count on there being anyone truly on his side. This is a classic double-bind: it is not like he did something for which he can now repent, it is rather that he did not do something that everyone thinks he ought to have done. How to undo what you did not do in the first place but should have?

In Gerbert's *Continuation*, following directly upon the *Second Continuation*, we meet several of these soothsayer/policeman/personal trainer figures who know him better than himself. At the gate of the castle where his sword will be repaired he is told, even before he has identified himself, that he will never learn the truth about the Grail until he has confessed and done penance (ll. 196–204) and that this is why his sword has broken. Once inside the castle he is again told that he is “molt entechiez” (deeply stained with sin [l. 262]). In his very next stop a peasant tells him that he will be fêted by the people of the town he is about to enter as their savior: “Que par vous avons recovré / Les oevres et les praeries, / Les biens et les gaaignerries, / Et trestoz los biens temporaus” (Through you we have recovered our work and prairies, our goods and profits, and all our worldly belongings! [ll. 366–368]). Similar scenes occur at almost every new encounter: he is told either that he is accursed and responsible for the devastation of the land, or that he is the savior of the people who, through his intercession, will be restored to health and prosperity (ll. 5650–5683). Can one be both savior and accursed? Either we are dealing with two separate factions who view Perceval in diametrically opposed fashion, as in Brigitte Cazelles's reading, or Perceval himself embodies both figures simultaneously, as in René Girard's notion of the scapegoat.

The scapegoat carries the burden of the collective's anger and blame but his/her banishment or death also exorcizes the escalating violence and restores the well-being of the land. His or her murder is thus re-enacted in ritual, and from sacrificial death is born the sacred. Perceval shares some obvious features with this figure, both through his association with the sacrificial figure of Christ and with similar figures in Celtic mythology. He is not, however, cut from a mold and he differs from some of the classic literary sacrificial victims (Oedipus, Moses, Job) in the way in which he internalizes the accusations directed against him, refashioning himself as the pawn of his accusers. The sacrificial plot also diverges at significant points from the classic model of exclusion to adopt a more utilitarian view, moving from the particulars of his predicament to the more general process of subject formation. And we never arrive at the logical outcome of the process of victimization that we have been led to expect. For that we have to wait for the *Queste del saint graal*, where Galahad's death and attainment of the grail provide

the simultaneous climax to the entire cycle. The *Continuations* stay focused on the process by which Perceval is recruited into the service of ideological ends rather than on his death and its effects on the community.

The disembodied voices which sound at key moments in his travels all represent ideological interests. In Gerbert, for example, one voice tells him to return to his family home (ll. 84–88); another explains marriage and its justification, urges him to stay a virgin, predicts that his sons will conquer Jerusalem, and warns him that if he gives up the quest his family will lose all (ll. 6882–6943). Hanging from a crucifix at a crossroads, a letter tells the newly literate Perceval to turn right (ll. 8258–8264) while another such crucifix's wooden hand points out which of three roads to take (ll. 16903–16917). An inscription on a shield warns that only the best knight can touch it (ll. 8495–8505) and a cadaver holds a letter identifying the name of his killer (ll. 10912–10940).⁴² Perhaps most interesting is the letter that Perceval receives from the *preudom* as he seeks to have his sword repaired. No one can read this round letter but it serves Perceval well: he pins it to his armor to serve as a protective scapula.⁴³

The broken sword, the third of Perceval's enigmas, is a virtual semiotic beacon. The motif is raised early on in Chrétien, when Perceval is told by his mysterious cousin that due to his own imperfections, the sword given to him by the Fisher King (specified as having been given to the King by his niece, i.e., Perceval's cousin [ll. 3146–3147]), will break into pieces in battle. Sure enough, in his first combat after that meeting, the sword shatters. In the *First Continuation*, during Gauvain's first visit to the Fisher King's castle, he sees, in addition to the elements described in Chrétien's *Conte du graal*, a corpse in a coffin, holding a sword that is broken in two pieces. In the *Second Continuation* as well, the broken sword has joined the lance and grail as a definitive part of the procession and it is still incumbent upon Perceval to ask about all three. In the last scene of the romance, the Fisher King finally gives Perceval the sword, asking him to put it back together, presumably something that no one else would be able to do. Perceval does just that but perfect suture eludes him: there is one small piece missing. His uncle exclaims that this is the true sign that he is the greatest knight in the world, then wraps the sword and gives it to him.

Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation* begins right at this point.⁴⁴ Though the Fisher King has given him the sword, he declines to explain the significance of the grail and lance, saying only that Perceval has not adequately repented of his sins. The proof, he says, is the gap in the suture, the signifier of lack:

Mais du Graal ne di je point / Ne de la Lance qu'en ceste point / En
doiez savoir le secré: / N'avez pas bien servi a gré / Celui par cui vous
le sarois, / Dusque a che que tant fait arois / Que li osque de ceste
espee, / Qui samble estre a cyssel colpee / Soit par vos mains soldee et
jointe. (ll. 15–23)

[But I cannot tell you anything about the Grail or about the Lance
for there's a secret you have to know about this: you have not served
sufficiently the one from whom you would learn about such things.
And you won't until you have joined and soldered together the chip
in this sword that looks like it was cut with a chisel.]

Now, there are several ways of looking at this sword. In an obvious sense, it stands as a metonym for Perceval's subjectivity. He receives it at a dinner after which nothing will ever be the same. When he arrives at the table, Perceval has not yet been accused of a crime. He is still caught up in object cathexis (the armor he so coveted is now his), still carries the ego ideal of the knights in his heart, can still imagine the self as armored, an impenetrable fortress.⁴⁵ The sword that the Fisher King (only later to be identified as a maternal uncle, a key figure in his accession to manhood) hands him embodies all of these *méconnaissances*. It was meant for Perceval, and is one of only three in the world, but it will fail him, as he learns from the young woman who identifies herself as his cousin. At that same meeting, the cousin informs him that the Fisher King was wounded "parmi les anches amedeus" (between his two thighs [l. 3451]); that Perceval has made a grievous error in not asking about the grail (l. 3523); that his name has been changed to "Perchevax li chaitis" (Perceval the miserable [l. 3520]); that his mother has died of grief on account of him, and that in not asking about the grail he bears the responsibility for the continued suffering of the King and his land (ll. 3525–3532). This is an almost parodic imposition of what in Lacanian psychoanalysis is known as the cut or "Non," the defining moment of sundering which instantiates subjectivity and

access to the symbolic order. All the elements are there: the castration of the patriarch, the loss of imaginary identity and replacement by a signifier, the dominance of the superego (in the imposition of guilt), and voilà – Perceval's an adult. And rather than question the sources of these tidings, rather than identify the lack projected upon him as a lack in the Symbolic order itself, the seat of Law which gives an illusory order to the disorder of his family and personal history, his gender and sexuality, Perceval believes these accusers, turns to their advice in order to take upon himself the responsibility for the failure of the Symbolic to encompass all, personified in what Lacan called the lack in the Other. He accepts that his crime is a lack within himself, rather than a failing of the symbolic (or of language), and so resolves (unconsciously) to block this lack, to stem its fatal incursion into his imaginary wholeness, through a series of what Lacan refers to as *objets a*, fetishized objects which become the focus and instigator of his desire while blocking out the failures of the system to contain what he has lost in the bargain.

At the same time that the sword becomes an emblematic *objet a*, it embodies characteristics of the Lacanian phallus, that ultimate *objet a*, with its illusory promise of power. This double-edged gift from the Fisher King breaks as he fights Orgueilleux de la Lande, just as the sword delivered by the mysterious corpse in the *First Continuation* will. This suggests, of course, that Perceval is not whole, not phallic, and that his quest, like that of any subject, will be to contain and fill that lack. Gauvain is, not surprisingly, no better at joining the pieces of the famous broken sword and so it is finally Perceval who succeeds, at least partially, in joining the fragments at the climax of Gerbert's text. As with so many signs of the markers of elite masculinity, the sword serves to eliminate and discriminate rather than to bring together; and we never really learn why it is that Perceval succeeds in his final attempt at reconstruction.⁴⁶ Though it appears that we are meant to believe that the Fisher King's impotence, evoked metaphorically through the Fisher King's wound and the broken swords, has been overcome through the suffering and military victories of the chosen young knight, a nagging dissatisfaction with that moralistic closure is hard to shake.

From this point on, Perceval assumes a different character, shaped almost entirely through his encounters with seers. The secrets that regulate the cycle are open secrets: things that are said to be hidden and

sacred but which everyone but the person said to be guilty knows full well. Yet, in both Chrétien's version and the *Continuations*, Perceval is one of the principal guardians of secrets and he embodies misrecognition. When, for example, he meets the Count whose daughter he will save from an unwilling marriage, he will identify himself and his cousin Ysmaine only in hushed tones so that no one can hear him. In Gerbert's *Continuation* Perceval attacks Gauvain at one point, unrecognizable in his minstrel disguise. In the same text, Lancelot challenges Perceval, not recognizing his armor. The secrets of family origins persist through Chrétien's *conte* and beyond. In the *Second Continuation* especially, Wauchier de Denain picks up on this motif, revealing that the hermit is the brother of Perceval's father, that the Fisher King's wound was self-inflicted (accidentally), etc. Secrets are what keep the system working; maintaining them and revealing them are what keep Perceval in line, even when it is obvious that he is perhaps the only one kept in the dark.

The *Second Continuation's* ingenious use of the chessboard is one of the cycle's most effective images of social manipulation. As a recapitulation of his trials and travels it is unmatched. Perceval, alone in the woods, comes upon what looks to be an uninhabited castle. Inside he finds a richly appointed room, dominated by an ivory bed with fine silk coverings. When he sits on the bed, a door opens and he is drawn into the adjoining room. There he sees a chessboard, set up and ready to be played upon, made of the most precious metals and gems. He cannot help sitting down to admire it and it soon begins to play. He is amazed to see that after his first move, a pawn from the other side matches him. He continues playing until he has been checkmated three times. Furious, he vows that he will never again allow a knight to be taken in by this board. He gathers it up and is about to throw it out the window when he is stopped by the voice of beautiful woman at another window who claims that it belongs to her. He agrees to respect her wishes if she will join him in the chess room. She does so and he begins almost immediately to declare his love:

Atant la prist, si la baisa; / De tant com pot s'an aaisa, / Et feïst dou
plus se poïst / Et elle li consanteïst, / Mais pas ne li vost consantir.
(ll. 20251–20255)

[He grabbed her and kissed her; he helped himself to as much as he could and he would have done more if he had been able to and if she had consented, but she did not want to give her consent.]

Instead, the lady imposes on him a quest to find the white stag and return to her its head. If he accomplishes this task she promises to fulfill his desires. Accompanied by her dog, he departs immediately on a quest which becomes an exercise in deferral. Now, this whole incident could be taken as a metaphor for Perceval's socialization to this point and of the adventures that ensue during his quest, first of the stag, and then of the dog.⁴⁷ The *gaste terre* is already a chessboard controlled by unknown forces. Desire, in the form of the inviting bed or the vision of the Arthurian knights, represents the threshold to the playing field. Perceval is always playing against an unseen opponent who speaks through visions, inscriptions, and voices, or through mysterious women who act as translators. His quests are ploys that shape him to accept a version of himself that comes from the Other. Perceval must save his land not by finding the Grail but by proving that he is selfless, that his aim in life is to serve and follow the dictates of a higher cause. Throughout, like a walking exemplum of Althusser's definition of ideology ("a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"), he must continue to think himself an autonomous agent, pursuing his own agenda.⁴⁸

CHRISTIAN KNIGHTHOOD AND SODOMY

Between Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du graal* (1180) and the last of the *Continuations* (1220–30), the tale of Perceval was refigured in another cycle as pseudo-Christian revelation: first at the hand of Robert de Boron in his *Roman du graal* trilogy, and then in the works of a series of authors who linked the diverse threads of Grail narratives into a form of eschatological odyssey. New models of Christian knighthood, monasticism, revelation, and heroism emerged from the resulting generic and ideological friction in the *Vulgate* (or *Lancelot-Grail* or *Pseudo-Map*) cycle. Homoeroticism can be detected throughout these cycles as something already present in human society but which can be isolated and excised, a necessary exclusion around which to construct a new order. Just as Alain

de Lille uses sodomy in the *De planctu naturae* as the necessary darkness from which to view divine light, a parasite without which Nature's creation could not be theorized, the Grail legends imply that by ferreting out and exorcising sexual desire from monasteries, intellectual communities and armies, we might all awake, like the narrator at the end of *De planctu naturae* from a post-lapsarian dream of contamination.

The impact of this discursive innovation – to identify, isolate, accuse, destroy, or banish through excommunication – on the developing category of knighthood cannot be overemphasized.⁴⁹ Mark Jordan closes a discussion of Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus* in his *Invention of Sodomy* with a crucial question: who is being addressed in the second person in this text? His answer is that Peter is speaking directly to the sodomite within the monastic ranks who has not yet acknowledged his own guilt, who can still be saved before losing his soul to the monster within him. This reading allows that homophobic discourse can create its own interlocutor. It situates the reader or listener of the text in the subject position of sodomite, and induces in all such readers the obligation to act as inquisitor of his or her own psyche. Peter's claim to interpellate: "I know you, I see you, I have the answer" is then associated with the voice of the institutionalized Other, Mother Church. Knights, monks, and clergy were increasingly subject to enhanced scrutiny in response to such discourse during, and especially after, the twelfth century, and they were expected to adhere to increasingly rigid norms, especially as relating to interpretation of dogma and celibacy.⁵⁰ Potential sodomites and the heroes of the early Grail romances have in common this interpellation into a disciplinary practice with which they must collaborate as a condition of their salvation.

R. Howard Bloch hypothesized in his *Medieval French Literature and Law* that the move from battlefield to trial by inquest was a gradual development symptomatic of a profound crisis within the ranks of the feudal aristocracy, a move which favored commercial interests and the centralizing claims of monarchy.⁵¹ It would seem that it also favored the interests of institutions which required a young male population trained in military arts and keen to enhance their personal reputation, independent of the power struggles of aristocratic family lines. The Grail romances' institution of the figure of the holy knight was a move toward greater institutional control of the individual subject – fictional

hero and reader – and the accusation of sodomy was an important tool in setting the parameters of gender-appropriate behavior and compulsive heterosexuality. The sense of shame and doom that such accusations occasioned in the fictional heroes generally led either to public rituals, quests, and inquests through which men could defend their name by revealing fantasy lovers (as in *Lanval* and *Graelent*) or revelations of true identity. In the process, the individual hero and reader, especially the young, male reader, finds himself caught in a form of double-bind: guilty because accused and thereby obliged to establish his masculine credentials through service to a higher cause which happens to be that of his accusers.

The terms of victimization that underlie the rhetoric of chivalric knighthood found in Chrétien's text are given much fuller development in Robert de Boron's *Didot-Perceval*. Essentially a translation of Robert's verse romances into prose, the *Didot-Perceval* has been called the first great text in French vernacular prose and it is here that the essential topoi of the international Grail tradition were definitively set.⁵² After the death of Christ, the imprisoned Joseph of Arimathea begins to receive instructions from a voice that emanates from a sacred vessel (chalice or grail) in his subterranean cell. He is told to build a table in memory of the Last Supper, a table at which he would preside, and to seat Bron, his brother-in-law, on his right. All those among them who believed in Christian doctrine would find a place at this table. One seat, however, must remain empty as it is reserved for Bron's unborn grandson, the future savior of his people. The Grail legends are thus complicit, from the beginning, with a system of discrimination, in which some are included and others rejected. The test of the Grail's powers arises when Moÿs, a Jew who claims to have converted to the teachings of Christ, seeks his place among the faithful. When, despite the trepidation of those present, he lowers himself into the one vacant seat, "si fu fondus tant tost et sambla que il n'eüst onques esté" (he was destroyed on the spot so completely that it seemed he never existed [l. 60]). The author explains that the criterion for this extermination is the candidate's level of grace. Moÿs has received none; nor, as the text establishes, would any Jew, for their progeny carry the stain of their fathers' sin against Jesus.⁵³

This story is recounted in the first of the three narratives which make up the *Didot-Perceval* but it apparently met with some success and

resurfaces in both of the others as well. In the *Merlin*, the one original table has multiplied to three, and twice more it is reiterated that only those who have never been touched by sin may approach the empty seat. By the time we reach the final portion, the *Perceval* proper, the table motif has taken on added importance. The young knight, Perceval, first approaches it as a cocky warrior, certain that he can meet the newly enunciated standard: best knight in the world. Perceval is no longer the awkward youth of Chrétien's tale. Confident that his prowess as fighter and lover will suffice, he takes his place at the table against the advice of all those gathered:

li piere fendi desous lui et braist si angoisseusement que il sambla
a tous çaus qui la estoient que li siecles fondist en abisme. Et del
brait que li terre jeta si issi une si grans tenebrous que il ne se porent
entreveïr en plus d'une liue . . . (ll. 204–205)

[the stone broke beneath him and let out such a sound that all those
who heard it thought that the world would be disappear into the
abyss. And from the noise that the earth let loose there came such a
cloud of darkness that no one could see anything as far as the eye can
see . . .]

This reaction from Nature is a result of Perceval having sinned not of his own volition but through ignorance. He must now find the Fisher King, witness the grail procession, ask the appropriate questions, and cure the king. Only then will the breach in the rock on which the empty chair sits close and only then will the curse on the country fall.

The real success of this *siège périlleux* motif can be measured by its next major reappearance, in Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation*, the last or next to last of the four texts that claim to complete Chrétien's romance. Gerbert's scene may be inspired more by the regal ambience of the Arthurian court found in Chrétien than the austere and monastic setting of Robert de Boron, but the narrative core comes straight from Robert. Arthur's court has been assembled for a magnificent dinner. Perceval, returning from an extended absence, is an honored guest. As the crowd moves forward to take their places, more than twenty of the finest knights of the land, including Gauvain, Lancelot, Erec, and Yvain, stand to the side, staring at an empty seat. Perceval, seeing that they do not move, follows their collective gaze to a strange-looking but richly

decorated golden chair at the head of one of the tables. He first imagines that it must be reserved for the King, but when he notices that Arthur is already seated, he asks those around him why this one chair stands empty. He wants to know if they are expecting an important guest, a king or prince for whom the chair would be suitable; otherwise he does not see why some guests are still standing. The King tries to put him off, telling him not to worry about what does not concern him, but Perceval, warning him not to lie, vows never to eat at the court again until he finds the answer to his question. The king breaks down and the assembled guests begin to cry. Even Keu, with whom Perceval has fought, weeps and curses the day that the chair was brought to them. Perceval is amazed at the reaction but remains unmoved and perseveres. Finally the King reveals his secret: the chair was a gift from the Fairy of Roche Menor, and she made him promise, before he knew any better, that it would forever more be placed at the head of his table at every high feast. The chair acts as a lure: only the one person capable of bringing honor and glory to his name by learning the secret of the grail and lance might ever sit on it unharmed. Arthur admits to having lost six knights already on account of that promise. As soon as the knights, enticed by the prophecy, lowered themselves to the seat, the earth opened up, the chair dislodged them, and they disappeared into the abyss below.⁵⁴

Inevitably, Perceval follows his predecessors' lead. As he approaches the chair, the Queen faints, Gauvain cries out for death and the King rises up, wailing. Perceval sits down just the same and there is heard a loud groan. As the earth opens beneath it, the chair hovers, suspended in mid-air, with Perceval holding tight. Then, just as the earth is closing over and the chair is about to settle on the newly solid ground, the six knights, presumed until now to be dead, are vomited back up and land, fully alive, at his feet. Amidst the general chaos, Arthur moves in to question them about what it was like "down there" (l. 1553). Their answer is worth citing in full:

Et il li ont trestot conté / Qu'il ont eü molt paine et mal / Et que cil qui
sont desloial / Qui plus aiment les jovenciaus / que puceles, sachiez
de ciaux / Que c'est merveille coment dure / Soz als la terre; en grant
ardure / Seront al jor del jugement. / *Et sachiez bien certainement / Que
la fee qui vous tramist / La chaïere ne s'entremist / Fors por che c'on seüst
le voir / Quel guerredon cil doit avoir / Qui entechiez est de tel vische. /*

Sachiez qu'al grant jor del juïse / Seront el parfont puis d'enfer / Plus noir que arrement ne fer. / Et la fee tres bien savoit / Que cil qui le Graal devoit / Assomer et savoir la fin / A tant le cuer loial et fin / Qu'il nous osteroit de l'abisme. (emphasis added, ll. 1554–1575)

[and they immediately told him how they had suffered great pains and said that as for those who are disloyal, who love young men more than young ladies, all should know that it's a wonder how those men can stand it under the earth, for they will be found burning on the day of judgment. *And you should know for sure, that the fairy who gave you this chair did so only so that anyone who is stained with such a vice might know the truth about what recompense awaits him.* Let it be known that on the great day of judgment they will be in the deepest pit of hell, blacker than ink or iron. And the fairy knew very well that he who would take up the Grail quest and learn its secret has a heart so loyal and true that he would free us from the abyss.]

The six knights then recognize Perceval as their savior. He has liberated them from “molt laide paine” (most horrible pain) and because of him they have been “en molt grant joie remis” (returned to a state of great joy [ll. 1580, 1582]). What they do not say is why they ever ended up there to begin with. I suppose we are to presume that they have shown intemperate pride in approaching the seat and have dared to assert their right to public recognition. Yet everything in their knightly training to this point would have prepared them to do just what they did: lay their claim to superiority over other knights.⁵⁵ Perhaps we could see them as guilty of having “stormed the gates of heaven,” i.e., claiming as their own what they have not yet earned, but if so, it points out again the inherent contradictions between knightly and religious training.⁵⁶

Arthur then feels compelled to reiterate the lesson to his assembled knights in the passage cited earlier:

Cil qui sont entechié / De si tres orrible pechié / Pueent estre tot esmari, / Je meïsmes m'en esmari / Quant j'en oï ore parler. / Honis sera au par aler / qui en tel pechié sera pris, / De mal fu soit ses cors espris / Que n'ai cure de tel deduit. / Beneois soit cil qui conduit / Sa feme ou sa mie et bien l'aïme / Et por loial ami se claïme, / Si fais deduis soit beneois. (ll. 1589–1601)

[Those who are stained with such a horrible sin might well be stunned. I myself was when I just heard about it. Anyone who dies in such a

state of sin will be disgraced in the hereafter. Let the body of anyone who cares about such pleasures be taken by an evil flame. Blessed is he who watches over his wife or lady friend and loves her and calls himself her loyal friend. And may this sort of pleasure be blessed.]

Arthur claims to be stunned at learning of such a sin, but the romance's readers would have been less so. Sodomy had long since become a feature of romance narratives, where it operated frequently as an open secret. What still stuns today, however, is the melding of the quest motif, the Grail, the fairy's chair, the sacrificial victims, the sin of sodomy, and the Christ-like liberator, Perceval, into one coherent whole. The young knight whose path has been set by anonymous seers, mysterious cousins, and magical chessboards learns at his moment of triumph that just beneath his feet there stretches a hollow chasm which supports both the Round Table and the cult of elite masculinity for which it stands. Who is this fairy who controls the portals of sodomy and its punishment and for whom is she working? Why would the unfortunate knights who failed to maintain themselves on the infamous *siège périlleux* find themselves so unceremoniously dumped into the pit of hell and why, once there, are they among the sodomites rather than another class of sinners? What link between knighthood, competition, pride, and sodomy was so obvious that it might have allowed such a scene to pass with so little further comment, either within the text or in subsequent criticism? It has been claimed, on the basis of these passages, that sodomy was indeed rampant in knightly circles, and that this author is simply echoing an ecclesiastical imperative to extirpate it. That might be the case, but it needs to be nuanced. It is far from obvious, for example, that ecclesiastical authorities approved of and shared in the ideology perpetrated by the Grail material. Many clergy actually recognized the danger of fusing Christian revelation and popular romance and warned against reading these narratives as contemporary gospel. It is more productive to imagine the text as actually producing in some sense its own reality rather than serving as a vessel for some pre-textual message. Read metaphorically, we might see the whole incident as redolent of a ritual initiation. All men, in order to accede to the homosocial circle (here, symbolized by the Round Table), must pass, however fleetingly, through the transient identity of subordinated and abjected

masculinity so as to glimpse the horrifying alternative to coercive homophobic heterosexuality.

There is an incident in the *First Continuation* with which the Fairy Chair incident shares some affinity. The young Arthurian knight, Caradoc II, is the son of Arthur's niece, Ysaive, and her lover, the magician Eliavrés. Years before, while Ysaive was married to Caradoc I, King of Vannes, Eliavrés conspired to keep Ysaive for himself by transforming first a greyhound, then a sow, and finally a mare into the semblance of the young bride so as to trick her husband. As the King made love to these animal figures, Ysaive was off conceiving a son, to be named Caradoc II, with her magician/lover. The boy Caradoc is then raised as the legitimate son and heir of the King. Years later, when Arthur is once again ready to call a Pentecost court, to which knights and dignitaries from all lands will be invited, Caradoc is in training as a knight at his uncle's court. One of those who accepts the invitation is Caradoc's true father, the magician Eliavrés. Upon arrival, he poses a challenge to the assembled knights. Eliavrés claims to have the power to rejoin body parts. He offers to prove his point by volunteering to let any willing knight cut off his head. If the knight can do so with one smooth blow, he promises to return a year later to do the same for him (ll. 2270–2272).⁵⁷ Of course, none of the knights take the bait, and why should they when there is nothing to be gained? The young Caradoc nevertheless sees it as a chance to establish his reputation and steps forward to strike the fatal blow. The headless Eliavrés then calmly rejoins his severed head and trunk, and Caradoc spends the next year awaiting retribution.

The logic behind both incidents is similar. The young knight is lured into performing an action that will establish his reputation but, as in the case of the Fairy of Roche Menor, the deck is stacked against him. Eliavrés has set up this challenge not to allow the young knight to prove himself but to force him to uncover a hidden truth. Through the ritual of decapitation and the one-year wait, a debt is both paid and renewed: young Caradoc avenges his mother's shame but sets in motion a cycle of vengeance in which he will finally be captured. Eliavrés' "sin" is redeemed and he "pays" with his head; but, being a wizard, he had nothing to lose. He can replace the head and move outside the cycle of exchange, without eradicating the cycle of violence. Caradoc, on the

other hand, stands to lose all – his inheritance, his noble name, his loving adoptive father, and his devotion to mother. Essentially, he will atone for his parents' sin as a sacrificial victim. The challenge to decapitate serves as a pretext to inculcate him, induce him to wrong Eliavrés so that he, in turn, can be killed. The sin is not his, but through his action it will be symbolically atoned for, bringing to a close the cycle of violence. In Alexandre Leupin's reading of this episode it is the story, the text itself, which comes to stand in for the lack (of father, of head):

Tout se passe comme si la faute originelle, la faille qui marque, de façon indélébile, le récit de la naissance, avait induit une économie narrative qui ne peut trouver de butée d'arrêt; de vengeance en vengeance, de corps en corps, de récit en récit, la blessure initiale migre sans fin. (ll. 241–242)

[Everything happens as if the original transgression, which marks indelibly the story of the birth, had set in motion a narrative economy that can reach no end point: from vengeance to vengeance, from body to body, from story to story, the initial wound migrates, endlessly.]

Now, there are parallels to be drawn with the magic chair of the Fairy of Roche Menor. Perceval, like Caradoc, is led into a trap so that he can serve as a sacrificial victim, yet allow it to appear that he himself has sinned. The sin in this case is not adultery: it is sodomy. The lure is not decapitation in one fell blow but the capture of the secret of the Grail with its attendant fame and glory. Just as the decapitation motif is a set-up for Caradoc, Perceval's sitting on the *siège périlleux* puts him in the dangerous position of having to atone for someone else's sin. In putting his life at risk, Perceval saves his fellow knights from hell, but this is not the end of the cycle of violence: it is just the beginning. Because the stakes are set by magic, the cycle of family debt and atonement will not be ended by his saving the knights of Sodom any more than Eliavrés' recapitulation repaid the debt of vengeance supposedly inaugurated by Caradoc's blow.⁵⁸ Caradoc's subsequent actions enact a simulacrum of vengeance that only appears to settle accounts. Perceval's freeing of the blackened knights is similar in that it is a staged liberation that obscures the true cycle of violence in which he has been caught.

Caradoc's example forces us to look closer at the terms of Perceval's victimization. If Perceval's "sin" is no more real than Caradoc's, yet he

is asked to pay a real price, then whose “sin” is at stake here? Caradoc becomes a murderer to atone for adultery; Perceval becomes an avenger to compensate for an act of sodomy. The elision from one “sin” to the other is telling. According to the logic of the text, Eliavrés is the adulterer who finds a victim to atone for him. Who is the “sodomite” who needs Perceval as his unwitting redeemer? Is it his deceased father, the former knight? His mysterious uncles, the Fisher King, or hermit? His dead brothers, knights all? King Arthur himself, or the knights of his Round Table? It is impossible to exclude any of these possibilities since, again according to Peter Damian’s influential logic, sodomy is a sin ever present, always lurking, impossible to prove, perhaps more recognizable to the accuser than the accused. The knights who escape hell with Perceval’s unwitting liberation seem surprised to have found themselves among the sodomites. Is this the famous lack of self-reflection of Dante’s sinners or do they really fall among the sodomites because that is the pit in which all men fall – sodomy as the Lacanian Real (what is excluded from symbolization), the pit around which masculinity constructs itself?⁵⁹ If, on the other hand, we follow the fairy’s logic, then sodomy is to be read as an original sin, an essential stain, and Perceval truly is the redeemer of all knights, at least from the perspective of orthodox paternal law.⁶⁰ I suspect that the fairy and the clerks who composed much of the Grail material had this, and perhaps much more, in common. To inculcate on the basis of an original, same-sex identification means not only that we are all guilty but that the foreclosed possibility of same-sex desire is always present, if occluded, and ever ready to surface. It means that the fairy and our authors understand that identity is based on repudiation and lack, that the very concept of stain is constructed as a game of perspective (which is the foreground and which the background?), and that sin itself is essential to identity formation. As Judith Butler says, discussing Althusser’s notion of interpellation: “the very possibility of subject formation depends upon a passionate pursuit of a recognition which, within the terms of the religious example, is inseparable from a condemnation.”⁶¹

To return then to the passages cited from Gerbert’s text: the first offers a rather extraordinary, if crude, metaphor of anal penetration and elimination (or ejaculation). Like Woody Allen as a hapless sperm, bracing for expulsion on the trip of his life,⁶² these young knights are plummeted

into a pit marked by darkness and heat where same-sex erotic attraction is the only sin in town. When finally someone sits on the chair above them, the hole by which they entered their subterranean hangout reopens as if by magic and they are propelled from the pit, landing at the feet of the seated Perceval. Even the lightly disguised intestinal inferno is apparently not a sufficient deterrent to the other knights, so Arthur feels compelled to draw the lesson once again for those for whom it has been staged. He first remarks, as he looks at our six, presumably dirty survivors, that those down below are “entechie” with sin, “stained,” here a literal use of the most common medieval metaphor for the sinner. His next statement is curious. Why would the sinners down there be amazed to find themselves in sodomite’s hell and why is he so amazed when he learns about it? Is it the fact that such punishment exists, that there really is a hell? Are the supposed sinners unaware that what they did was wrong? That they got caught? That his own knights could be found among such company? That perhaps God made a mistake? Either we assume that the young pretenders to the Chair did indeed prefer men as sexual partners, or that an infallible God somehow got it wrong. If the former is true, then did they need a trip to hell to admit it? And if they did not share those preferences, then why is that all they can report? Is that all there is down there or is that just all they see? If Perceval is the liberator who will free all men from sin, like Christ opening the gates of hell, would his very first priority really be to save falsely accused knights from the pit of sodomy? Is it not more likely that the aim of those whose interests he represents is to save all knights from their “tendencies” by extirpating the entire category? If, as a further consequence of his liberating campaign, he is to free the *gaste terre* from the scourge of sterility, then we should perhaps look more closely at that metaphor. Might not the barrenness of that wasted land be figured as a land of sodomites, Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire, or the fiery plain of Dante’s *Inferno* 15 and 16?⁶³

The true force of Arthur’s inquiry is carried by his next pronouncements, consisting of a series of performatives delivered before the assembled court: “Honis sera . . .” (Shame on he who . . .), “De mal fu soit” (May he be consumed by an evil flame . . .) and “Beneois soit . . .” (Blessed be he who . . .). It is in these enunciations that Arthur rejoins his predecessors in homophobic rhetoric (the *Eneas* women, Guinevere,

Alain de Lille, Peter Damian, etc.), for the accusation of sodomy always acts within romance as a type of hate speech, and thus as a potential performative. That is, the accusation performs its own dirty work in the time of its enunciation, even as it claims that the true pains are yet to come. Arthur pretends to be shocked by what he has heard, and can thus pretend that what he is saying is original to him; but he speaks in a language that carries the force of tradition. According to Judith Butler's recent work on this question, the citationality of performatives both increases their virulence and the responsibility of the speaker for the added force of the threat or blow.⁶⁴ Arthur's performatives are both illocutionary (in that they wound as they are uttered before the assembled court) and perlocutionary (because they promise future retribution). As in other cases of homophobic discourse, even from the twelfth century, under ideal conditions the speech act can actually constitute a subject through discourse or can have that as its intention as it is enunciated. Think of how the popular schoolyard epithet of "faggot" works: it makes the subject a faggot, i.e., different and despised, whether or not the subject conforms in any way to the terms that define the category or even knows what the term means.

How are those ideal performative conditions met in this key scene? According to J. L. Austin's classification, quite well.⁶⁵ The king, as King, speaks in a conventional manner; his audience has certain expectations about the force of his discourse; the utterance is performed correctly and completely (in that the blessing and condemnation are in line with the story just told by the knights returned from hell and kings are expected to bless and condemn). Furthermore, Arthur is very convincing in claiming that the words represent his own feelings, and there is every reason to believe that his word will be taken as law. The pronouncement gains in virulence precisely because it is not directed to any one figure at court but rather to a whole group of knights. It is through their eyes that we witness the *siège périlleux*, it is for their gaze that the whole scene was concocted, in order to constitute them, and the listeners and readers of romance, as Arthurian, ergo masculine, subjects.

Gerbert's *Continuation* is so effective in linking the sodomy and *siège périlleux* topoi because it conjoins the haunting fear of failure that defines masculinity and the specter of same-sex relations that permeates any

all-male environment. In Gerbert's schema the pit is always right there beneath the magic chair, and the magic chair must forever be at the head of that table, in accordance with Arthur's oath. Just imagine how hollow the knights' footsteps must ring after this scene and how the arbitrary incrimination of innocence and difference must echo throughout the ensuing quest. Ever present but unacknowledged, hinted at without being revealed, an active force of coercion rather than a passive force of repression, Sedgwick's "open secret" acts as "a mechanism for regulating the behavior of the many by the specific oppression of the few."⁶⁶ Perceval is driven to sit on that chair precisely because other knights cannot, and it is doing what they cannot do that makes him a man. The pride, presumption, and competitive spirit of knightly culture lead here to an ambiguously anal end. What are the options within masculinity if one were to follow the implications of this text? Sodomite or savior: the polarizing extremes of hypermasculinity. No actual sexual act or desire is required other than wanting to sit where other men have tried to sit, wanting to be what they might have been. And that one desire leads in this text to a series of sexualized metaphors: expulsion, insertion, ejaculation, and withdrawal. Whatever can these knights' sin be but mimetic desire, same-sex modeling, seen through the lens of homophobia as leading inevitably, perhaps even instinctively, to the fearsome specter of same-sex love? Hence, the double-bind, the disciplinarian's dream: knights must be like other knights, only better; yet wanting to be like other knights leaves one open to charges of sodomy. Where then does this leave heterosexuality? It seems so fragile here, almost invisible, a shadowy alternative to the place where every knight is inevitably drawn – the fairy's magic chair.⁶⁷

By the time that the narrator of the roughly contemporaneous *Queste del Saint Graal* took up the topos of the *siège périlleux*, the roster of candidates had changed and the link with sodomy is no longer so openly evoked, but male sexuality is still central to the episode. Galahad, son of Lancelot, is "si bel enfant et si bien taillié de toz membres que a peines trovast len son pareil ou monde" (such a beautiful boy and so well formed in each part of his body that you would be hard-pressed to find his equal in the world [*Queste*, 2]). The magic chair is this time written upon so as to identify its role as arbiter of excellence. Lancelot,

rightly concerned over his knightly cohorts' sometimes excessive drive to better one another, decides that the inscription on the chair must be covered with a veil until the chosen one has arrived. The seat is explicitly called dangerous, presumably because it will exert its fatal attraction over knights willing to give up their lives to enhance their reputations in the eyes of other men. By the time that the knights arrive at the castle, however, the inscription has been altered. The new message states explicitly that this seat is for Galahad ("Ci est li sieges Galaad" [l. 8]), "a cui il n'en fut mescheu en aucune maniere ne mes a cestui" (where none but he has ever sat unscathed [l. 9]). Henceforth it is the virginity of Galahad that emerges as the major requirement of chair occupancy. Credentials as heterosexual lover no longer qualify, as Perceval and Lancelot learned earlier. They might get you the title but not the final prize. The polarity of masculinity is reinscribed, but differently: no longer the binary, heterosexuality or sodomy; the choice is now heterosexuality or chaste androgyny.

As R. Howard Bloch once noted, some medieval genres responded to societal dilemmas in much the same way that an innovative inquisitorial judicial system responded to the faltering institutions of the feudal world. That is, we can speculate that romance gained in popularity after 1160 first because it provided a means of conceptualizing complex social negotiations as the face of feudalism was transformed under a strengthened monarchy; and secondly because it offered representations of newly emerging social roles. The Grail texts exemplify this second order of representation in that they offer new models of masculinity, independent of the demands of marriage and war. Whereas in earlier romance texts sodomy was invoked so as to re-establish a heterosexual imperative leading to the founding of genealogical lines and the clean transfer of power, Gerbert's *Continuation* raises the specter of sodomy without ever really eradicating it or subsuming it under a socially sanctioned institution like marriage. Instead, the knights remain at their table, men among men, subject to the gazes of one another and a patriarchal order which can only invoke the voice of a fairy to justify its ends.

When the knights who have returned from the circle of sodomy tell Arthur that the chair was given to him by the "fée de Roche Menor," it is to let all those stained with that vice know what awaits them in the

next world. It is as if the role of the chair has finally been revealed: not to identify the knight who will learn the Grail secrets but to keep the rest of them in line. In at least one sense, then, Gerbert is himself a fairy. It is his text which performs this function of setting up the discriminating criterion, not the embedded curse of a diegetic malefactor. When the returned knights tell the court that the fairy knew that one knight would appear to save them from the abyss, a knight whose “bonté” and “vaillance” would also allow him to find the grail and lance, they are explicitly linking the liberation from sodomy to the liberation from the curse of the *gaste terre*. Suddenly, the world in which these characters wander begins to look like that spot of hell. To return to a point made earlier, the dry and accursed plains of the Fisher King’s land sound like the fiery plains of the biblical Sodom (Genesis 19), and this comparison is strengthened further along in Gerbert’s tale when Perceval surveys the destruction visited on the land by a knight whose shield bears the image of a fire-breathing dragon. Here is the description from Gerbert’s *Continuation* of Perceval’s entry into this land and his meeting with the woman dressed backwards:

Pensant est un val avalez, / Entrez est en gaste contree. . . .
Il sambloit que dedens un ré / Eüst estéars ses amis, / Qui par dedens
le char fu mis, / Que piez, jambes, quisses et ventre / Avoit ars, al mien
escientre; / tresci par deseure le chaint / L’avait li fus ars et ataint: /
Tains et noirs fu tot l’aparent. (ll. 8906–8907, 8920–8927)

[Deep in thought, he went into a deep valley: he had entered the Wasteland. . . .

It looked like her friend/lover, who was laid out in the wagon [she was hauling] had been burned in an oven: his feet, legs, thighs and abdomen had all been charred, or so it seemed to me. The fire had reached right up to and just above his waist. Everything you could see of him was black and discolored.]

A later description of the *Gaste Chité*, as described by the devil, provides further details:

la terre si desertée, / une jornee tot entor / n’a vile, ne chastel, ne tor /
ou demoré ait un estruit / que n’aie fondu et destruit: / bien le verras
en ceste voiage, / que tu morras de fain a rage / se tu maintiens plus
ceste voie. (ll. 14452–14459)

[the land is so deserted, during a whole's day travel you see no city, castle, tower, dwelling or building of any type which hasn't been knocked down and destroyed. You'll see this during your voyage for you'll surely die of hunger or rage if you stay on this path.]

These descriptions of the destruction and barrenness of the land recall both the consequences of feuds of vengeance (*faides* [l. 13600]) in a world of masculine privilege and the aftermath of divine punishment. The connection between the Fisher King's genital wound and subsequent sterility, the state of perpetual warfare, the destruction of the land, and the pit of sodomy beneath it is established most explicitly in Gerbert's text. It is at least implied that when Perceval saves the knights from the pit he saves all potential sodomites, i.e., all inhabitants of the land, from the same fate, and that sodomy is a scourge which is never far from the excesses of competitive violence. The grail and lance as sexual symbols of male and female genitalia, the lance as weeping phallus, begin to make more sense if we refigure the *gaste terre* as the plain of Sodom and the wound of the King as the curse of sexual transgression.

Gerbert encourages such a reading, however subtly. When Perceval stays up one night to learn how his enemies' armies seem to come back each morning refreshed and renewed, with a limitless supply of men, he meets a mysterious old woman, the purveyor of a magic potion that brings the dead back to life. Perceval confronts her, since these are his enemies being resuscitated, and the woman recognizes him instantly. She tells him that he is aptly named, for it is thanks to him that the *val* will be *perchiez*: "et li lius frais et depechiez / Ou li basmes est enserrez" (the valley will be pierced and the spot where the balm is held will be broken and destroyed [ll. 5669–5671]). Her dire prediction, which goes on to link Perceval with rape and the sexual transgressions of his family, is a prelude to her explanation for her actions. She has been sent by the King of the *Gaste Chité* to keep up the assault on Gornemaut's castle because it is he who made Perceval a knight. This king she refers to as *li tyrans soudomites* (l. 5716). He is later identified as Luciabiach and his domain is again called the *Gaste Chité* (l. 14451). Because of her service to this implacable foe, Perceval beheads her and takes possession of her barrels of magic potion. Her speech provides one more piece of evidence that someone is making connections between the sodomites beneath the

earth, the plague on the land, and the sins of Perceval's family.⁶⁸ The sodomites are singled out above all others as those responsible for the sterility that is the source of the total destruction of the land. According to Mark Jordan, summarizing one current of medieval thought on this matter: "The [Church] law says that because of this crime there come about famine and plagues, and earthquakes. . . . Again Sodomites are the adversaries of God, and murderers and destroyers of humankind."⁶⁹

Eve Sedgwick evoked the image of the "glass closet" in her *Epistemology of the Closet* as a useful heuristic for understanding the way in which accusations of sodomy structure the larger institution of gender difference and configurations of sexuality. Here, in Gerbert de Montreuil's *Continuation*, a similar structure sits, like the Round Table, amidst the gathered community and structures their behavior. Its only viable threat is this: if the secret of sodomy (i.e., that heterosexuality is itself a construct) is revealed, regardless of how transparent a secret it seems, then what binds the community will disintegrate. The threats of terrestrial ruin in Chrétien de Troyes's foundational tale, the *Conte du graal* and in the massive *Continuations* it inspired, make a sad and curious sense when studied in this light.

Queering the Celtic: Marie de France and the men who don't marry

Women are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought, and sold. . . . Men are of course also trafficked – but as slaves, hustlers, athletic stars, serfs, or as some other catastrophic social status, rather than as men.¹

Our own historical accounts, insofar as they replicate and support the dominant view of a Middle Ages that is “naturally,” effortlessly, monolithically Christian, masculinist, and heterosexual, erase the particular sites of struggle at which the female, Jewish, “heretical,” queer resisted silencing even as they were brought to silence. . . . We can intervene . . . to hear, in however muted and distorted a fashion, the queer presences against which that homophobia was anxiously erected.²

In truth those who have such [same-sex] inclinations and desires are half-beast. They have shed the desirable element, their humanity, and in the sphere of conduct are made themselves like unto monsters. From levity to lewdness, from lewdness to lust, and finally, when hardened, they are drawn into every type of infamy and lawlessness.³

The prologue to Marie de France's *Lais* offers, appropriately, several hints as to how the texts should be read. First, she defends hermeneutics, saying that texts worth our while are always difficult and demand an active reading style. It is the reader who brings to the text his/her own experience and thus the text's own “surplus.” This interactive model of interpretation is not new in the twelfth century, nor is it original to the *Lais*. Marie avers that philosophers have always written and read like this, a statement borne out by other contemporary prologues, so to enhance their own and their readers' wisdom. Her second point is that reading is good for us because at the same time that we learn from it, it

keeps us out of trouble. On the basis of this reasoning, she defends her choice of material – Breton *lais* – and suggests that though the work we are about to read or hear is not a translation from Latin, the language of most “bone estoire[s],” it is in its own way an archival project, a rescuing of wisdom from the past (24, 29).⁴ Based on this defense, then, we know that Marie thinks her *Lais* contain valuable intellectual and moral truths; that we should put into reading them as much time as she put into writing them (“soventes fiez en ai veillie” [24, 42]); and that the meaning of the texts ultimately depends on what we bring to them. It is our gloss, based on our “sen,” which imbues the text with its “surplus” or meaning (22, 16).⁵

Each of the individual *lais* that follows is also preceded by a prologue of sorts, ranging from a mere four lines (*Le Fresne*) to the longest of them all, the twenty-six line introduction to *Guigemar*. Since *Guigemar* is also the first of the *lais* copied after the *Prologue* in the only manuscript which contains all twelve of the *lais* (MS H: London, British Library, Harley 978), this means that in this manuscript we read directly from one prologue into another.⁶ Yet the *Guigemar* prologue is easily distinguished from its predecessor. Marie’s tone is more defensive and prickly. She says that when you have a good story to tell you want to do it right; and that she, being someone who does things right, has earned her praise (“Oëz, seignurs, ke dit Marie, / Ki en sun tems pas ne s’oblie” [26, 3–4]).⁷ People are jealous of success and they attack the successful like vicious and cowardly dogs, slandering them to whomever will listen (“Sun pris li volent abeisser: Pur ceo comencent le mestier / Del malveis chien coart felun / Ki mort la gent par traïson [26, 11–14]).⁸ People have a right to say what they want of others but when they do, they deserve to be called spiteful gossips (“gangleür u losengier” [26, 16]) since their words cause hurt and irreparable harm.

With that denunciation ringing in our ears, we turn immediately to a story about a young Breton knight, Guigemar, whose own near perfection has led to criticism from those around him. The *mise-en-abîme* seems obvious: Guigemar, like Marie, is surrounded by spiteful gossips. The question remains, however, where to situate Marie’s own investment in this story – is she projecting herself into the persona of the young knight or does she act as one of his attackers? Given that the three *lais* I am most interested in all concern knights who are attacked

by the jealous or fearful for what they *are* rather than what they *do*, I suspect we will have better luck locating Marie's sympathies if we pay closer attention to the knights' camp.

Guigemar, in the first of these *lais*, has just returned to his Breton home in glory. He has completed his obligatory knightly training and apprenticeship and distinguished himself in the practice of arms at the courts of Flanders and France. Now he is expected to complete his accession to mature adulthood by taking up his preordained position in aristocratic society through marriage, procreation, patronage, and military defense. Into the figure of Guigemar we might therefore project any number of other Arthurian knights whose early careers are similarly marked by great ambition, athletic and military prowess, devotion to an ideal, and initiation into the ranks of chivalry. In the literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these young men are set up as erotic idols, the centerpieces of every court festival. Allusions to sexuality in these quasi-hagiographic narratives are largely contained by tight, pre-scripted homosocial bonds and carefully circumscribed rites of courtship. Open expressions of male-male affection and rivalry are encouraged, while the feminine is distanced: morally, as embodying a threatening sexuality, and topographically, through the ritual of tournament and quest.⁹ When I say that women are distanced topographically I mean both that the knight's life on the road imposes a certain obligatory solitude within homosocial circles; and that even when in the presence of women, at tournaments and court, containment is effected through segregation of the sexes, both physically and discursively. The knights perform for the feminine gaze and the patriarchal power that subtends it; the women gaze down upon the knights from their towers and galleries, communicating through signs and intermediaries.¹⁰ When Guigemar returns to his father's land, we thus anticipate, on the basis of our previous romance readings, that it is either to marry and procreate, surely to be expected from the only son of Oridial, much-loved knight at the court of the Breton monarch, Hoël; or to savor some family time before setting out again on the grueling road to Arthurian glory. This family visit is, however, rather highly charged. Guigemar has returned to see "father and lord, his mother and sister, who have desired him greatly (veir sun pere e sun seignur, / sa bone mere e sa sorur, / ki mult l'aveient desiré" [30, 70-73]), but their desire to have him with them this time

carries a price. Deliberately upsetting our romance expectations, Marie links this family rhapsody with a discussion of what is presented as a flaw or problem:

A cel tens ne pout hom truver / si bon chevalier ne sun per. / De tant
i out mespris nature / que unc de nule amur n'out cure. / Suz ciel
n'out dame ne pucele, / ki tant par fust noble ne bele, / se il d'amer la
requeïst, / que volentiers nel retenist. / Plusurs l'en requistrent suvent, /
mais il n'aveit de ceo talent; / nuls ne se pout aparcevoir / que il
volsist amur avoir. / Pur ceo le tienent a peri / e li estrange e si ami.
(28, 57–68)

[Nowhere could one find so fine a knight. And yet, Nature made a mistake when she made him for he never had any interest in any sort of love. There was no lady or maiden regardless of how rich or beautiful she might be who, had he asked for her hand with love wouldn't have jumped at the chance to have him for herself. Several of them even propositioned him, and often, but he had no interest in such matters. No one who observed him could find in him any interest in having the experience of love. This is why he was thought to be in danger [marked] by both friends and those who didn't know him.]

Several features of this passage need clarification; first, Marie's allusion to Nature in line 59. There are two ways of reading this line and multiple possible translations. Either Nature has “mespris” Guigemar, in which case we should read the line:

Nature made a mistake [was at fault] when she made him [this
time]; *or*
Nature transgressed her own laws; *or*
Nature failed him;

or perhaps it is Guigemar himself who is at fault; in which case we should translate:

Guigemar had so transgressed against Nature; *or*
Guigemar had so failed in his duty to Nature; *or*
Guigemar had so disdained Nature.

No translation I have seen follows the second option.¹¹ This is an important point, for if we were able to assign responsibility for this “failing,” it might also help locate Marie's point of view and clarify

her stance on normative sexuality by tale's end. If Nature is to blame, i.e., assuming for a moment that there is blame to be assigned, then are we to applaud Guigemar's willed attempts to conform to cultural expectations? And if Guigemar is the transgressor, does that mean that he deserves to be punished?

NARCISSUS AND GUIGEMAR

The passage just cited makes clear reference to the Ovidian figure of Narcissus, despite the accommodation to chivalric discourse in the adjacent passages.¹² Narcissus was already a prominent reference in love lyric by the time that Marie was writing but, as in all such references, he carries an accumulation of associations pointing to idolatry, illusion, misreading, pride, or homoeroticism, depending on the author and reader. Bernart de Ventadorn's most famous song, "Qan vei la lauzeta . . ." (song 70, 43) provides an example of a twelfth-century interpretation.¹³ A figure at the early Plantagenet court on the Continent, Bernart is thought to have been writing in the mid-twelfth century, surely before 1170, the earliest date usually given for the writing of the *Lais*.¹⁴ Marie was probably associated with that same court; most scholars agree that her dedication to the "noble reis" (70, 43) in whose heart all goodness takes root is a reference to Henry II.¹⁵ Both in the Ovidian model and in the troubadour example, Narcissus is presented as a negative model, a trap in which males are ensnared and perish. Bernart de Ventadorn provides a sophisticated and emblematic illustration:

Anc non agui de me poder / Ni no fui mieus de l'or en sai / Que.m
laisset en sos huelhs vezer / En un mirail que mot mi plai. / Mirals,
pus me mirei en te, / M'an mort li sospir de preon, / Qu'aissi.m perdei
cum perdet se / Lo bels Narcisus en la fon. (ll. 17–24)

[Never again did I have power over myself or belong to myself from that moment when she let me see in her eyes a mirror that greatly pleased me. Mirror, since first I looked at myself in you, the sighs welling up in me have killed me and I lost myself like the beautiful Narcissus in the fountain.]

Like his Ovidian ancestor, this young man loses himself to his own image, but where the death of the Ovidian character had been

precipitated by a spurned male lover, eager for revenge,¹⁶ the early medieval homologues are led to the fatal mirror through the instigation of a female character.¹⁷ In the first part of the *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1230), for example, an embedded retelling of Ovid's tale has Echo begging to die if she cannot have Narcissus, then praying that he should die as well through a burning love of his own. Within the diegetic tale, this scene serves as an exemplum from which one is meant to conclude that self-love can never match the love of others. The moral drawn by Guillaume de Lorris at episode's end, however, seems to contradict the tale just told. Narcissus still comes to a bad end through his refusal of Echo's proffered love but it is women who are blamed for their unwillingness to love men and their indifference to male suffering. The switch in the gender of the person who brought the curse upon Narcissus, from young male lover to young female lover, goes unmentioned so that the more familiar topos can be reinforced: women destroy men. It is instructive to compare this scene with yet another anonymous, contemporary reworking of the Ovidian tale, *Narcissus*.¹⁸

In this retelling, Narcissus is the ideal knight: pursued by all, but completely indifferent to love. The author generally follows Ovid except that he stresses the intervention of Nature at every point in the process of creation, and adapts the mores, setting, and rhetoric of the Roman original to models taken from twelfth-century court life. Again, there is no mention of the spurned young male lover whose prayer of revenge in Ovid instigates the hero's punishment. Nor is Echo heard from. Instead, the unhappy lover is Dané, daughter of a king, ostensibly the perfect match for the perfect knight. In a paradoxical twist on the tale, Dané means to seduce Narcissus by convincing him that *she* is his mirror image or at least a completely symmetrical partner. As she tells Narcissus at their first meeting: "assez somes d'aé / D'une maniere de biauté" (we are the same age, of like beauty and status [124, 481–482]). And perfect he is: beautiful beyond measure, a boy of fifteen who loves to hunt above all else.¹⁹ For Dané, he becomes an idol to be worshiped and adored. Sleepless after a first sighting, she laments as his image haunts her:²⁰

Que je le vis si bel, si gent: / Ques piés vi es estriers d'argent, / Quel vis, quel cors, ques bras, ques mains! / Ques ert sa seles et ses lorains! / Ques eus, quel bouce por baisier! / (116, 281–285)

[How beautiful he was when I saw him, and so noble: What feet in those silver stirrups, what a face, what a body, what arms, what hands! What a saddle and harness! What eyes, what a mouth, made for kissing!]

The young girl is driven to confront him in the early hours of the morning as he heads out into the forest with his companions. Knowing where his party will likely pass, she hides in the bushes, wearing just a light tunic, and waits until his companions have gone by. When Narcissus finally appears, trailing far behind the others, she moves into the pathway and stands directly in front of the oncoming horse. Thinking that this lovely young woman in a flimsy gown is a fairy, Narcissus dismounts to address her. Her first and rather intemperate response is to kiss him and declare her great love (“*Je te desir sor tote rien*” [I want you more than anything] [124, 462]). Narcissus is frightened by her forwardness and tells her that they are too young for love (“*car trop somes encor enfant*” [for we are still children] [126, 496]). She then disrobes completely before him (“*Et gete ariere son mantel: / Tote est nue, le cors a bel*” [She throws off her cloak and is totally naked, her body beautiful] [126, 509–510]). When still he refuses to take her, she calls out for revenge: “*Venus, who betrayed me, along with your son, the God of Love, – cast me from this peril and avenge that one for whom I am dying in despair!*” (“*Venus, qui m’a traïe, / Ensanble qu diu d’amors ton fil, / Giete me hors de cest peril / Et de celui prendés vengeance / Por cui je muir sans esperance*” [130, 612–616]).

Dané’s reasoning at this point is interesting. She cannot understand why Narcissus should refuse her since she is: (a) the daughter of a king (“*Donc ne sui jou file le roi?*” [128, 546]); and (b) young, noble, beautiful, a virgin, and has beautiful hands and feet (“*Sui genius femme, sui pucele, / Sui assés gente et assés bele, / Et s’ai biaux piés et beles mains*” [128, 559–561]). She knows nothing more about him than his birthright and his beauty, has never exchanged a word with him, yet this seems to suffice. He, in turn, is expected to fall for her on the same visual and genealogical grounds. Scorned, however benignly, she calls out for revenge.²¹ In the next scene, her prayer is answered. Narcissus is out hunting a stag when he approaches a fountain to quench his thirst. The image he sees there he first mistakes for a water nymph.²² This detail recalls Narcissus’ own complicated family history. His father was

Cephisus, a river, who raped Liriope, a nymph. Thus, in his attraction to the supposed nymph, he is either replicating his father's (heterosexual) desire and seeing himself, unwittingly, as his own mother or one of her clan; or he is enacting a potentially incestuous narrative in which he falls in love with his own mother, confusing her for himself. Most curious in the poet's description is Narcissus' blindness, for what he sees reflected before him is not just the face but also the body of the reflected image: "Mes mout esgarde viseument / Le vis, le cors que voit si gent; / Loe les eux, les mains, les dois" (But at length he stares and gazes at the face and the lovely body, admiring the eyes, hands, and fingers [132, 659–661]). Sexual difference seems not yet to have dawned on Narcissus. In his love of the image, he thus resembles ever more Dané. Rich and beautiful, perfectly matched, they now suffer in kind, rivals over the projected image of perfect young knighthood.

If we pursued this reading using psychoanalysis we could argue that Narcissus is actually pre-Oedipal, that he is replicating in this drama the story of his own parents: his hunter-self (the paternal model) pursues and attacks his hunted-self (the raped mother). He is thus both caught in the snare of maternal love from which he has no paternal threat to save him and caught in the imaginary, the mirrored fantasy of plenitude represented by the mother to whom he has brought the phallus. I would like, rather, to emphasize that he has been forced into this confrontation with the image, prematurely perhaps, through the intervention of others' desires. Rather than express complicity with the indictment of Narcissus that one finds in most of these texts, I want to argue that, like Perceval in the preceding chapter, he has been used as a pawn by others to their own ends: in this case the punitive instantiation of heterosexuality.

Furthermore, we could read Narcissus' identification in more strictly Freudian terms. In his essay, "On Narcissism," Freud discusses the subject who is not able to give up a satisfaction that he once enjoyed: "He is not willing to forego the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgment, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal."²³ Freud goes on to distinguish between sublimation, in which the subject directs itself

toward an aim as a way of deflecting sexual satisfaction, and idealization, in which the subject idealizes an object in a kind of sexual overvaluation. We could take Perceval and Guigemar as two figures subject to these strategies: Perceval, who sees in the shining vision of knighthood at the beginning of the *Conte du graal* an ideal in which to sublimate sexuality, and Narcissus, who sees in the reflected object (image) an ideal in which to invest sexual energy. In other words, they simply represent two resolutions to the same dilemma, two possible paths. My only problem with this analysis is that when viewed through a heteronormative prism, one is pathologized (Narcissus) and the other is at least nominally celebrated (Perceval), a move that denies their inherent similarity while still culpabilizing Perceval for an unnamed sin. According to Freud, "the formation of an ideal . . . is the most powerful factor favoring repression; sublimation is a way out, a way by which those demands can be met without involving repression."²⁴ But certainly it is the ideological framework within which that subject idealizes and sublimates that determines whether repression is necessary, whether it leads to death, or whether the object to which sexuality is sublimated (homosocial activities) is considered appropriate, and therefore "a way out."

Our twelfth-century Narcissus is so susceptible to Dané largely because she already represents a first step toward this ego ideal. She is a proleptic vision of his own double, and therefore, unsettling. He is, after all, her equal in beauty ("Ne sui gaires mains biaux de toi" [134, 684]) and it is remarked that the express importance of his suffering is to ensure that he will understand her suffering: "Or sen je bien com lor estoit" (Now I understand what it was like for them [694–695]); "Car quant je ri, je li voi rire, / Quant je sospir, ele souspire, / Et quant je plor, ele autretel" (For when I laugh, I see her laugh, when I sigh she sighs; and when I cry, she does the same [134, 705–707]). This exaggerated reciprocity is a parody of love and of the rhetoric of the "Other self" that we find in monastic writings and in Cicero. As the poet beats on the drum of difference, Narcissus castigates himself, bitterly denouncing the imaginary state in which he has become entrapped: "En moi est tot quanque je vueil / Et si ne sai dont je me doeul . . . je sui ce que je tant desir . . . Por quoi n'en fa ge mon talen?" (In me is everything I want and yet I don't know why I suffer so . . . I am myself what I so desire . . . so why do I not do what I need to do to satisfy my desire?

[144, 905–907, 910]). By the end of his monologue, Narcissus has concluded, as intended, that he is himself to blame for his suffering. Guilty of not having listened to Dané, guilty of not having acted on her initiative, he imagines that the inevitable conclusion foisted upon him is original to him: he deserves to die (“Bien me devoit maus avenir . . . quoi qu'il parole et il se blasme, / Li cuers li faut, . iii. fois se pasme” [It is only right that evil befall me . . . as he speaks and blames himself, his heart fails and three times he loses consciousness] [146, 943, 961–962]).

Narcissus' behavior is usually equated with selfishness, apathy, lack of empathy; but how his behavior differs from that of others who are in love is not clear. As Steven Brahm has shown, such readings are an attempt:

to efface the homoerotic by discounting Narcissus as delusional; to efface the homoerotic by transforming Narcissus into a woman; to efface the homoerotic by promoting it as the necessary other against which heterosexuality can be invented: these are the markers of the historically diachronic Narcissus that have rendered him pathetic, delusional, and so very useful.²⁵

Has Narcissus really acted any differently than one would expect? Would not true lovers of any kind or persuasion be too caught up in their beloved to accept an offer like Dané's? And is not Dané's infatuation with Narcissus every bit as imaginary, delusional, and self-replicating as his love for the image? These questions bring us back to Guigemar, a text unmistakably haunted by the figure of Narcissus.

There is one expression at the end of the incriminating passage cited above in which Guigemar is explicitly marked by his difference. Marie says that Guigemar is thought to be “a peri” (67) and claims that all who have seen him recognize this. This is the very same term used by Dané in the *Narcissus* to signal her distress and psychological imbalance after Narcissus' refusal: “Venus, qui m'a traïe, / Ensanble qu diu d'amors ton fil, / Giete me hors de cest peril / Et de celui prendés vengeance / Por cui je muir sans esperance” (130, 612–616). “A peri” can be translated most nearly as “in danger, in peril,” yet none of the translations that I have consulted has rendered it this way. Instead, we read that: “this refusal was reproached as a black mark against him by foreigners and friends alike”,²⁶ that “both friends and foes gave him up for lost.”²⁷ Marie

concurr with Dané and her text could not be clearer: erotic attachments are extremely dangerous when they do not conform to cultural norms. Guigemar's difference attracts the community's attention to a degree that puts his life at risk.

What is this mark, clearly visible even to strangers, that will occasion Guigemar's complete transformation? Marie began the passage by attributing the blame for his being remarkable, or different, either to Nature or to his own flawed will, and in terms that recall, albeit somewhat ambiguously, Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae*. Though contemporary (*De planctu* is usually dated to 1155–60), Alain's text does not seem to have been widely known in the twelfth century. It does, however, find some echo here; perhaps only because Alain and Marie de France were both in the sway of some of the same literary and scientific discourses then current in Plantagenet intellectual circles. Both authors are thought to have had some attachment to the court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine and this court seems to have had a particular interest in sorting out and refiguring the historical, monastic, and rhetorical connotations of sodomy, especially as they claimed descent from the Trojan line.²⁸ As in Alain's *De planctu*, Nature is blamed for Guigemar's "defect," but Nature is herself flawed as well. As the apparition explains to the narrator in the *De planctu*, men are ultimately responsible for their own behavior, even when Nature has been negligent in the exercise of the divine plan. This somewhat schizoid analysis – that Nature is at fault but men must still do penance – is still evoked in Dante over a century later and in Papal doctrine to the present day.²⁹ Alain certainly, and often Marie, too, have been seen as supporting a heterosexist presumption in their writing, but there is a case to be made that neither is as absolutist as might appear, or at least that the heterosexuality to which they refer is a much more fluid field than the nineteenth- and twentieth-century model to which it gave birth. Alain's condemnation of sodomy is done in such a wildly extravagant rhetorical form, and couched in such outlandish grammatical claims, that critics have sometimes taken at face value what needs to be seen as potentially ironic; and, at any rate, it is never clear that the only alternative to the sodomite for today's readers is the modern heterosexual. In between those two extremes would lie a vast field ranging from celibacy to those who reproduce without pleasure. Beyond the evident condemnation of forced marriage and pleading for

consensual heterosexual pairings that one finds in the *Lais*, Marie is also attentive to the subtle allusions to same-sex desire she might have found in the Celtic material from which she worked and to contemporary literary models such as the *Eneas*.³⁰ Her real interests seem to be intertextual as much as moral; rhetorical and anthropological as much as didactic.

The Celts, after all, were associated throughout the classical period with deviant sexual practices. This does not necessarily mean that these accounts are in any way true, but if they were based on evidence, however misinterpreted, the conservative oral folk tradition of the Celts might also have preserved echoes of these homoerotic practices in the warrior class into the twelfth century.³¹ Marie's interest in these sometimes morally ambiguous tales (at least from a Christian viewpoint) suggests that she saw in them material that she could develop for her own purposes which would also interest and instruct the court. That marriage, social and sexual identity, and erotic love should be so overtly at stake is not surprising given the climate at the Plantagenet court (the support for troubadour song, the rise of romance, the abundant use of Ovidian themes, the accusations of queer sexual doings directed at Eleanore, Richard Lionheart and Henry's ancestry) and Marie's own position as a twelfth-century anomaly, a highly literate woman writing in open competition with men. If the *Lais* are meant to stand together, linked in an intricate architectural and semiotic whole, as many have surmised, then these are the themes which tie one *lai* to another.³²

I am therefore going to outline a series of potential "queer" readings of a select group of Marie's *lais*, all of which go against the grain of much of the idealizing terms in which courtly literature has often been read.³³ If we loosen our grip on contemporary, normative notions of gender and sexuality, and begin to look at courtly literature as a set of potentially normalizing ideological tracts, a force for cultural conservatism, I believe we can better appreciate Marie's own injunction to read her tales like detective stories, attentive to subtle shadings and covert messages.³⁴ It is, after all, Marie herself who, in the aim of preserving something that is in danger of extinction, invites these queer readings. The sexuality of single young men is problematized in most of these *lais*, in one way or another, but especially in *Lanval*, *Equitan*, *Guigemar*, *Chaitivel*, *Les deux amants*, *Bisclavret*, and *Yonec*; and even a cursory reading of *Eliduc*, in

which an abandoned wife and her husband's new young lover bond and retreat to a convent, leaving the unfaithful to save his own soul, must be read as a critique of heterosexuality as well as marriage.³⁵ We are encouraged to empathize with poor Lanval even before Guinevere has let fly her cowardly accusation of sodomy and to identify with the plights of the victimized knights in *Chaitivel*, *Bisclavret*, and *Guigemar*. While all would agree that Marie's principal interest is in marriage practices and the fate of imprisoned *mal mariées*, she does problematize male sexuality within the larger thematics of marriage and erotics in a way that sets her apart from most of her contemporaries.³⁶ In *Chaitivel*, for example, she deconstructs chivalric discourse and overturns gendered notions of desire; and in *Eliduc* she stretches considerably the parameters of *fin'amor* topoi. In so doing, she alerts us to pre-Christian readings lurking beneath the surface of her tales and justifies her likening of reading to a process of excavation. Though she recognizes that her undertaking is dangerous, even insinuating that she, like her characters, might soon find herself "a peri," she continues her investigation into the Breton past by insisting that such stories might well instruct the future.³⁷

The young men and women protagonists of the *Lais* are often victimized by their society or their elders. Marie's young men suffer under the pressures of chivalric knighthood and her young women must overcome their inscription as cultural commodities. In both cases, the protagonists are incarcerated within discursive structures that threaten to undo them. Though my topic here is principally the status of somehow tainted young men, it is impossible to separate out completely the experiences of the male from female protagonists as they are largely interdependent. Young women characters are gendered in relation to their use and exchange value within a male hierarchy, but these young women emerge from the horror of their plights more resilient, paradoxically freer from the most virulent aspects of the social and psychological scripts that delimit the young men's choices. Marie presents their incarceration as the result of men's fears of women's sexuality, of women's ability to evade patriarchal scripts; but she also seems to recognize that it is precisely because of their imprisonment within those patriarchal restraints that they are more immune to the killing effects of mirroring which destroy the young men. As a general rule the young female protagonists do not identify with their captors or capitulate to them, as the men

most certainly do. Guigemar must suffer to be like other men; Lanval is isolated for his difference from his fellow knights; the imitative game of Equitan and his seneschal ends in a spectacular show-down; the *mal-heureux* suitors die from murderous competition; the young *amant* dies trying to be the man other men want him to be; Milon and his son, in another confrontation of the self and the double, almost kill each other in single combat.

The women, on the other hand, and with the notable exceptions of the mother of Fresne and wife of Bisclavret, find wisdom and consolation among other women. Marie distinguishes a double dichotomy in the *Lais*, not just one of gender but also of age. She seems intent on revealing how cultural formations victimize youth at the expense of older generations' attempts to justify their society's practices. Using Celtic sources, perhaps as her shield, she evokes her century's anxieties over rapid social change and offers a series of alternate morals in what could be seen as a largely didactic collection of tales, socially if not sexually. Courtly in her insistence on triangular love and a moral code based on purity of intention, she is not above deconstructing her own (courtly) rhetoric when it can be shown to have contributed to the unhappy ends of her characters.

It is in the grouping of four of the most "supernatural" *Lais* that Marie most openly confronts these topics, and most notably in *Guigemar*.³⁸ In the passage cited earlier, in which the young knight is identified as a marked man, Marie is careful not to identify him as anything other than different. He is not necessarily a sodomite, not even, as in Ovid, an object of desire to other men. He is just not appropriately heterosexual. Like Narcissus, he stops short of following his culture's most imperative dictum: marry and procreate. For this reason alone he, like Lanval, is stigmatized, disciplined, taught to toe the line. Had he simply engaged in sexual acts with men, in fact, it is unlikely that his behavior would have attracted much notice – provided, of course, that he also married and had children. According to the literary logic of 1160, accusations of sodomy invariably mean that the marked man will be proven not guilty of having performed such acts. As Simon Gaunt has pointed out, the homophobic discourse we read is intended primarily to enforce general adherence to a code of obligatory heterosexuality rather than to stigmatize individuals with same-sex desires.³⁹ In both *Lanval* and

Eneas, to take the most prominent examples, the heroes are impressively cleared of their charges without our having learned anything specific about their sexual activities or desires other than that they are loved by women/fairies. Their acquittal could signify simply that they have rejected an *identity* as sodomite, a *preference* for same-gender sex or/and that their culture will henceforth focus exclusively on their public role in procreation, foundation-building and empire-construction, rather than on their private lives. The acquittal serves as a performative speech act marking only their full integration into masculinist chivalric discourse and a sign that they will henceforth be seen only within the terms of that discourse. Any transgressions against that discourse will henceforth be invisible, for to acknowledge any breach would require as well a re-evaluation of the Law itself. As Eve Sedgwick demonstrated so convincingly, cultural *méconnaissance* is a means of keeping secrets, secrets that support and maintain privilege and the status quo.⁴⁰

An example taken from a completely different setting is pertinent to this discussion. Tanya Luhmann's study of the Parsis, an ethnic minority of Persian origin within India, takes as its point of departure the rash of accusations within the community, since the end of the Second World War, that the majority of its young men are homosexual.⁴¹ Her conclusion, based on extensive field work, is that cultures whose communal identity has been undermined by colonialism, or whose cultural models have been destroyed in a postcolonial climate, frequently express their pessimism regarding the future through a sort of "urban myth" that stigmatizes young men as feminized, less virile than their forebears.⁴² In the case of the Parsis, it was the end of the colonial era and the departure of the British that led to a crisis of identity which found expression in the truism that most of their male children were gay. Luhmann shows that this myth has little relation to any real phenomenon and that it works only as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Her research showed that some young Parsis are gay, while most are not; that same-sex relations are no more prevalent among the Parsis than amongst any other community. Normative gender roles, on the other hand, always and already highly dependent upon cultural construction, can be among the first to show signs of transformation in relation to any number of social stimuli. They serve as lightning rods and attract attention to supposedly deeper phenomena. Masculinity is particularly prone to misperception in such

periods of rapid change and the first male dissenters from cultural norms are often stigmatized as effeminate, homosexual, dangerous. Luhrmann found such a mechanism at work amongst the Parsis: blame is laid on these stigmatized individuals rather than on the more perplexing and intangible notion of cultural change. *Guigemar*, *Lanval*, and many other courtly or Arthurian tales seem to share in the type of cultural hysteria that Luhrmann has described, and the whole phenomenon of Arthurian literature in the Plantagenet court could be reread productively in this light. The institution of chivalry, the disruption of the early crusades, the growth of monasticism, all of which required the seclusion or absence of men, seem to have fed into a climate in which rigid codes of masculinity were both ratified and called into question. The literature of the mid-twelfth century sometimes appears to be complicit with attempts to impose strict gender codes, purportedly along traditional lines, in which masculinity is figured through strong male bonds, heroism, and spectacle. In fact, such codes subtly rework earlier literary models, and can themselves be seen as both innovative and repressive.⁴³

Guigemar's story is emblematic of some of these tensions as it links anxiety over masculinity, in the figure of the paradoxically accomplished knight, with an initiatory regime intended to produce a heterosexual subject. If we remove the mythic overlay, in the form of otherworldly directives, we find that the tale resembles nothing more than a traditional initiation ritual. The destined outcome of such a ritual is to foist a discursively induced state of manhood (conceived of in heterosexist terms) upon a hesitant youth by ritual means.⁴⁴ It is a tale of capture, isolation, travel, conquest, and return: familiar components of rites of passage almost anywhere in the world. What particularizes it are the telling Celtic touches, some of which may even have been added by Marie to sustain her point that in upholding tradition she was also offering productive models of behavior for her own time.⁴⁵ In other words, the *Lais* could be seen as an attempt to respond to the pessimism and sense of cultural crisis that reigned amongst the Anglo-Norman nobility.

Guigemar, model youth but for his one "flaw," sets out on a hunt, is separated from his friends, and is confronted by a white deer/stag grazing with her fawn. Hunting, seemingly the epitome of model masculine pursuits, was, in the opinion of some, already a suspect activity.⁴⁶ As practiced by the nobility, it can be construed as selfish, solitary,

non-productive, and wasteful. John of Salisbury rails against it in his *Policraticus* as an activity that shares features with suspect sexual practices, including sodomy, and for the troubadour Bertran de Born hunting represents the ultimate decadence of the patron class. Hunters do not go to war, do not sustain an economy, do not engage with those dependent upon them, do not earn fame and glory. If men are going to go off on their own, in packs, they should do so as monks or knights. The solitary pursuits of hunters lead only to killing rather than worship, and their exploits better no one, as opposed to the ideals of knighthood. It therefore makes a kind of sense that it is in the course of hunting that Narcisus and Guigemar are revealed as anti-social and antipathetic, deserving of their fates.

The animal Guigemar encounters on his hunt is white and has attributes of both sexes: “Tute fu blanche cele beste; / perches de cerf out en la teste” (This animal was completely white and had atop her head the antlers of a stag [ll. 90–91]). His arrow hits her on the forehead and she falls stricken, but the arrow, ricocheting back from where it came, strikes the archer so deeply in the thigh that it traverses his flesh and pierces his mount. If we read the myth as it has usually been read, and as the text itself seems to dictate, we find ourselves witness to a symbolic initiation. The deer/stag could be seen as Guigemar’s former self, a mirror image of his own former queer nature: alone, hermaphroditic, marked as double and different, psychically bipolar – the sacrificial sodomite put to rest in the forest. This reading is only one of several possible, however, and not entirely satisfactory unless one wishes to endorse the myth’s patriarchal and heteronormative overtones.⁴⁷

That the doe/stag is white is already in Celtic myth a sign of the otherworldly. Its appearance can thus be read either as a sign of divine intervention (but of what divinity, Christian or pagan?), as the traumatic encounter with the Real (i.e., that which escapes the symbolically ordered social sphere – the terror and supreme pleasure of ultimate transgression), or, on the contrary, as the figure of ideological superimposition of a fantastical order of Law upon that Real. I see the doe/stag as the stand-in or straw man for the last of these possibilities, the imposition of the Lacanian “non/m” (the cut from above, the imposition of Law, initially in the form of language and gendered identity). The doe/stag is not alone: with him/her there is a fawn who merits no further attention

from the author. The fawn's presence is required only to underscore the maternal and paternal functions of the beast. Recognition of difference is the crucial factor that might have averted the death of Narcissus and the lesson that Guigemar must supposedly learn, but for the hermaphroditic deer it carries no such positive valence. S/he has it all: attributes of both sexes, the ability to procreate (through autogamy?), wisdom, and psychic foresight. The murder of this animal is required within the logic of the myth only as a prerequisite to Guigemar's own suffering, just as his suffering will announce that of another. Self-sufficiency in the doe/stag is erected as a negative model for young knights. S/he must die as a sacrifice to the culture's imperative that young men assume a masculine identity from which all vestiges of the feminine have been banned.

Yet his/her intrusive presence, like the disproven charges of sodomy in other of the texts discussed in this book, lingers, leaving a stain on the surrounding story. For the doe/stag gives the lie to courtly rhetoric which denounces the delusion of self-sufficiency and the curse of sterility. S/he *does* procreate and does serve a function, albeit sacrificial. The animal's queer nature is necessary to culture, both to reveal the existence of transgressive sexuality and to reinforce normative constraints through its elimination. S/he is evoked like the sodomite so as to institute and point others toward an unambiguously heterosexual realm which can claim originary status through the excision of its negative model. In this respect, the beast truly stands as a sign of the sodomite, a double of Guigemar himself, a pure negative in the eyes of the disciplinary order. The young knight must encounter, destroy, and move beyond this negative model as part of initiation into heterosexual adulthood, the only form of adulthood acceptable.⁴⁸ It is not, as in the positive mythical reading, that Guigemar will turn his back on imaginary identification and the myth of self-sufficiency after his murder of the beast so as to take up the responsibilities of adulthood. Rather, it is that he will have recognized in the beast his own inevitable, if metaphorical, fate as sacrificial victim should he choose to ignore the cultural imperative to take up the phallus.⁴⁹ The secret the beast tells him is the secret of every persecuting society: someone must suffer so that he can be saved. He is told that it is a woman who must suffer for him but this is just part of the patriarchal myth.⁵⁰ It is the queer beast who must suffer so that the collective can retain its illusion of control. The adulthood to which

Guigemar accedes is decidedly post-lapsarian: he becomes a partial self, only what remains after the cut. His accession to adulthood is predicated upon the loss of an *unidentifiable* sexual identity that is perceived by the collective as a *lack* of sexuality, a lack of lack. Guigemar as pure negative cannot be tolerated; if lack is not felt it will be imposed. Once he is struck by his own rebounding arrow, he finds himself stretched out alongside the dying doe/stag who speaks to him and reveals his fate. His wound is clearly a form of castration but it paradoxically excises a “bad” lack that supposedly does *not* instantiate sexual desire so as to replace it with “good” lack which instantiates a form of culturally sanctioned desire. Thus, within patriarchal mythic terms, the thigh wound signifies genital maiming, a state of impotence and sterility that affects the whole land. Desire is marked as primarily social in that its fulfillment restores the social order and the legitimacy of Law more than any supposed gap in subjectivity.

The initiatory text which guides Guigemar’s path has as its aim his destruction and reconstruction by a heterosexist majority. Weakened, and in a state of physical and mental deterioration, he is led by mysterious forces to the shoreline, where he finds a magnificent boat. He steps aboard, takes refuge in a magic bed, loses consciousness, and is transported to another land. We are told that the boat has no skipper, that a mysterious fate will henceforth direct Guigemar’s path. In other words, Guigemar’s foes are anonymous and invisible, a version of the mysterious chessboard from the Grail *Continuations*.⁵¹ To this point, he looks like Tristan, a sacrificial victim left to drift to his death. The young man survives this ordeal, however; but he emerges divested of power, divorced from family, stripped of identity (sexual and otherwise), and abandoned to the forces that now control him. Wounded and vulnerable, secured in solitary confinement, he is finally receptive to a new identity.⁵² He has undergone a coercive process of interpellation: the boat knows him, waits for him, transports him toward a pre-existing identity that he has only to take up in fulfillment of destiny. In this new and restricted environment he becomes, at least if we read the myth at face value, what he imagines the Other desires.

What remains of Guigemar during this process? His body, presumably, but also his knightly status, noble blood, and breeding. Guigemar may show no signs of remembering, or missing, his former life; but

for the reader/listener he remains a handsome, rich, and accomplished knight. Our prior readings in romance inform us that this is but one of many trials and quests that he will endure. Thus, even as he lies, anonymous and powerless, in the magic bed, we remain confident that breeding will win out and he will emerge victorious. When his boat docks, a beautiful young *mal mariée*, a prisoner of her much older husband, comes aboard with her attendant to save the handsome victim with her touch. Genders reversed, the sleeping beauty is awakened by his savior and her handmaiden and nursed to health. He tells them that he has been kidnapped, “raped” (“ravie” [42, 330]) by the magic ship, and that he must find one lady who will suffer for him.⁵³ Marie reverts at this point to the rhetoric of courtly sacrifice, the terms of which had only recently been codified in vernacular verse in the *Eneas* romance. The bandaging of his wounds and maternal care induce in him another malady – love; and, as prophesied, he emerges from his convalescence wounded more deeply from this new foe than from the piercing of the arrow. He falls almost immediately into a state of amnesia, forgetting everything about his former life, as he suffers all the symptoms of love sickness inherited from the Ovidian tradition. As he nears the point of death, or madness, he confronts the lady with his feelings. The consummation of their love is dealt with in just a few lines: “Ensemble gisent e parolent / e sovent baisent e acolent; / bien lur coviengne del surplus, de ceo que li altre unt en us!” (52, 531–534) (Together they lie and talk, and kiss often and hug; as for the rest, and what others do in such cases, they seem to take to it very well).⁵⁴

Marie’s reticence to discuss the sexual details is entirely characteristic of her times but her use of the word “surplus” is noteworthy. As she stated in her *Prologue*, the surplus is what we bring to a text rather than what is ostensibly already there. Sex, she seems to be saying, is more discourse than acts.⁵⁵ It is a gloss we learn, a discursive formation. Moreover, the sex act is referred to in social terms, as what “others” do in such a moment, as something that is beyond, or extra. Guigemar is thus being taught about sex as it has been defined and taught by others. Obligatory heterosexuality is clearly the point of the lesson, and Marie implies that once divorced from his former identity, the young man is a quick learner. But if we are to believe in the success of the operation, as myth would have it, then the physical love story seems

a bit slight. Marie gives all her attention to the prelude to sex, to the self-centered expression of pain and suffering, and dispenses with their time together in two lines: "It seems to me that Guigemar was with her for a year and a half and their life was full of pleasure."⁵⁶ By the next line fate has intervened and discovery is imminent. The lady is obviously a stand-in on some level for the doe/stag, a corrected version, and with her shares the power of prediction. Knowing beforehand that they will be discovered, she ties Guigemar's shirt in a knot and authorizes him to love only the one woman who can undo it. He, in turn, fashions a sort of chastity belt to assure her fidelity. She can only ever take as a lover the man who can free her.

Guigemar escapes the husband's wrath on the same magic ship which brought him there, but the escape rings somehow false. The supposedly enraged husband had every right and opportunity to kill this interloper who had defiled his dream of total possession. When he and his three henchmen break into the lady's chamber, Guigemar grabs hold of a heavy wooden curtain rod with which he threatens to leave them all "mahaigniez" (56, 600), the same word used to describe his own thigh wound and the infamous wound of the Fisher King in the *Roman du graal*. Though Guigemar, become phallic avenger, is outnumbered four to one, he fights off three swordsmen with his stick. The husband relents and sets him free on the waiting barge. As in the *Conte du graal*, the encounters seem staged and fixed, more like initiatory hurdles through which the young men must pass than real battles.

Welcomed back to his father's kingdom, he falls into a deep depression. Pressure to marry mounts but Guigemar announces that he will never take as wife any woman who cannot untie his shirt without ripping it. Women rush from all parts of the kingdom to try to "straighten out" ("despleier") his shirt without "cutting it to pieces" ("depescier" [58, 649–650]). This knotted-shirt motif first appeared earlier in the telling. As he lay moaning in the forest after having been pierced by his own arrow, Guigemar bandaged his cut with his own shirt: "De sa chemise estreitement / bende sa plaie fermement" (32, 139–140). Later, at their first meeting, the lady again bandages his wounds and then chooses, significantly, as a token of their bond of love, his shirt tied in a knot: "Vostre chemise me livrez! / El pan desuz ferai un pleit" (54, 558–559). The possible word play on "plaie" (wound) and "pleit" (knot) suggests

that the tie between wound and knot is deliberate.⁵⁷ The shirt which once bound the knight's wound will henceforth signify his inability to love. The shirt/bandage suggests throughout that there is something behind or beneath it when, in fact, it seems destined to create just that illusion. When the shirt is finally undone and the wound is allowed to reopen, Guigemar will again be open to love. This sounds superficially like desire springing from a Lacanian lack, but its primary purpose is to construct masculinity as sacrificial, equivalent to an open wound which can only be "cured" by a mother/nurse/lover, a perverse form of heterosexual desire.

The Lady, meanwhile, also escapes her seaside prison when she finds that Guigemar's boat has conveniently returned for her. Though she has been a prisoner for years, no one has yet seemed concerned with rescuing her. Only when she can be of use in the heterosexualization of Guigemar does her salvation appear to matter, and then as an adjunct to his own. Curiously, though, the boat does not carry her to Guigemar's side, as we might have expected. Instead she is deposited in the kingdom of his Breton rival, Meriaduc, who promptly claims her for his own. When he learns that she wears a mysterious belt that only one man will ever untie, he draws the astute conclusion that it is she who has tied Guigemar's shirt and probably vice versa. He rips open her dress and attempts to undo the magic belt, but failing, calls on all the knights of his realm to try their luck. Meanwhile, Guigemar's family sees to it that ladies line up to try their hand at his knot. These symbolic rapes, of both Guigemar and his lady, look suspiciously like public rituals intended to reinforce the links between compulsory heterosexuality and social success. Both Guigemar and the lady, in their mystery, are seen as holders of the phallus, sexually undifferentiated except as carefully delineated objects of desire to one sex or the other. Though we have been led to believe that Guigemar returns from his ordeal a devoted heterosexual, it can at best be called a closeted identity. To those friends and family members who previously found him strange and marked, his behavior must now appear almost completely unchanged. He remains unmarried and unmoved by women's overtures, despite their avid attention, and on top of that, he is now figuratively impotent and deeply depressed. We have to wonder how convincing his story of a phantom lover must have sounded to the people around him, demanding an heir.

Even the fairy-tale ending is subverted in Marie's telling. When finally Guigemar is reunited with the Lady, after an absence of little more than two years, he is not even sure that he recognizes her. Only when she succeeds in untying his knot and he has felt the belt on her hips does he acknowledge her as the woman he has been seeking.⁵⁸ The story ends on a high note, suggesting that when all is right with Guigemar justice reigns in Brittany. His enemies defeated, his lady returned to him, all of his problems are solved ("Ore a trespassee sa peine" [68, 882]). But we have to wonder. What we have witnessed is a queer young buck led to the heterosexual trough and taught to drink. Courtly literature begins to look more like an instructional manual: how to convince your adolescent son, with a little force if necessary, that it is, after all, only a phase.

The problem that unmarried men present to their societies is at the center of several other Celtic *lais* as well, but nowhere figures more prominently than in the Tristan legends.⁵⁹ When King Marc, under pressure from his barons, sends out word that he will marry only the woman to whom a mysterious golden hair belongs, he does so expecting that the quest will lead nowhere.⁶⁰ His plan is a subterfuge, designed to allow him to remain single, in the exclusive company of his beloved nephew, Tristan. Marc says so explicitly in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*: "While Tristan lives, know it once and for all: there will never be a Queen and lady here at court" (151). In like fashion, Guigemar probably does not expect much when he sets down his conditions about untying the magic knot. His "refusal to love" statement could be seen as part of a topos which always points toward queer readings. Back from his fantasy, Guigemar may believe that this ruse will grant him peace. But we know that it is already too late. His resolve to defy his culture's norms is now part of the larger frame of initiation. Already interpellated, only he can still think that his will is free.⁶¹

TROUBLED DESIRES

Marriage and sexuality dominate many of the other *lais* as well:

In *Frêne*, we meet another young lord forced to marry against his will. This time the issue is less about normative sexual orientation than class. All is resolved when the young woman his advisors force him to

marry turns out to be the sister of his beautiful and supposedly orphaned concubine. Once the ancestry of his true love is revealed, they are free to marry.

Yonec is a form-changing bird who consoles a lady held prisoner by her jealous husband. The bird can become a man, as he does when the lady's fantasy calls for a knight. He can also become a woman, as he does when he takes the form of the lady herself in order to receive Communion and proclaim his Christian credentials. When he fathers her child, the story takes a decidedly queer, if heterosexual, turn.

Chaitivel tells the story of an impotent and invalid knight who meets his demise through incessant competition with other men and his lady's indecisive nature. When finally his rivals have been killed off and he could take up the role as exclusive lover of his lady, it turns out that he has been rendered impotent through wounds received in the same battle. This *Lai* serves as the ultimate critique of chivalry for promoting a gender system within which men reach the status of sanctioned masculinity only through public heterosexual display and competition with other men.

Chevrefeuille tells of the meeting between the adulterous lovers, Tristan and Yseut, prevented from marrying by the forced marriage of King Marc with the previously unknown and unseen daughter of the Irish king, Yseut herself. *Les Deux amants* end their quest in death when the young man insists on segregating male and female spheres of knowledge. Instead of drinking a magic herbal potion prepared by women, he perseveres against all odds in carrying his lover, unaided, to the top of a mountain and expires before he gets there. *Eliduc* involves a love triangle in which an unfaithful husband brings his young lover to Brittany without telling her he is married. When she swoons at the news and fails to regain consciousness, he presumes she is dead and leaves her body in a chapel deep in the forest. His wife follows him there one day, revives the girl using ancient magic, and when the wife asks only that he found for her a new convent, Eliduc and the girl marry while his wife takes the veil. Years later, however, the women are reunited in the convent and Eliduc dedicates his remaining years to God.

Even this brief survey gives some idea of how integral gender and sexuality conflicts are to Marie's project, but two of the *Lais* in particular, both previously referred to as "supernatural," deserve a bit more attention.

In *Lanval*, the eponymous hero is a less than well-to-do foreigner who is made to feel his difference. As the tale opens, King Arthur is distributing gifts to his assembled court. Only one knight is left out, Lanval. The narrator explains that this is because Arthur simply forgot him ("ne l'en sovint" [134, 19]) but the text contradicts itself in the very next line. Apparently no one has bothered to call attention to the slight or to defend Lanval because they are all so jealous of his looks and prowess. It is clear that Lanval has been excluded not as an oversight but because he is not one of them. Though the son of a king, he is far from the source of his wealth ("luin ert de son heritage" [134, 28]). Isolated from the others, Lanval wanders off alone one day into the forest. There he is invited to the bed of a lovely fairy who offers him, in return for secrecy, her body whenever he desires it and unlimited riches. Though he now has more success at court, distributing his new-found wealth amongst his peers, he meets his doom in the person of Guinevere, who, ever observant, chooses him as a perfect candidate for adultery and sacrifice. Disposable, without family or allies, unlikely to make too many demands or be believed by the King and court, Lanval is her man. One day, when, as is his wont, he wanders off from a group of knights enjoying themselves beneath the castle windows, Guinevere descends to make her offer.⁶² When Lanval refuses her advances, pleading loyalty to the King, she accuses him of being a lover of boys.⁶³ In his defense, Lanval tells her, in anger and indignation, of his trysts with the fairy. For this, he finds himself accused not only of dishonoring the Queen with unwanted advances but also of having insulted her by finding someone else more attractive.⁶⁴ For having defied her order of silence and secrecy, the fairy cuts him off from her favors. Only after a trial at which the fairy appears as his last-minute savior, is he exonerated; but his penance is that he must leave with her, never to be seen again.

Clearly Narcisus, Guigemar, and Lanval have a lot in common. Let us try to imagine them as a viewer might who does not benefit from the omniscient point of view of the narrator. All three prefer to be alone; they all declare their indifference to love; and they develop fantasy relationships in response to the strong pressure exerted upon them to make love to women and, presumably, procreate. Guinevere's charges against Lanval could apply to all of them:

"Lanval," fet ele, "bien le quit, / vus n'amez guaires tel deduit. / Asez le m'a hum dit sovent, / Que de femme n'avez talent. / Vaslez amez bien afaitiez, / Ensemble od els vus deduiez. / Vileins cuarz, malvais failliz, / Mult est mis sire malbailliz, / Ki pres de lui vus a sufert, / Mun esciënt que Deu en pert!" (148, 279–288)

[Lanval, she said, I know what it is: you don't really go for this kind of pleasure. It's often been said about you that you have no interest in women. What you like is a well-built valet; that's who you like to make it with. You filthy coward, you weak little scoundrel. What a disgrace you are to my lord who has kept you on (in spite of everything). Because of his association with you I know he has also lost God's favor.]

Clearly indebted to the Queen's tirade in *Eneas*, Guinevere's remarks are interesting in their own right. Once again, the charge is spoken by a woman who feels wronged and slighted and, as in most of the homophobic diatribes from the twelfth century, Guinevere thinks only in terms of binaries. If Lanval does not want her, he does not want women; and if he does not want women, then he must want men. From this illogical chain of reasoning she draws the equally illogical conclusion that Lanval is therefore not a man or a knight. Though he is never explicitly feminized, as in the case of Alain de Lille or Orderic Vitalis' sodomites, he is a substandard male. Never mind that the text has already told us that he is the finest knight and one of the most beautiful, an object of envy for the other men. As far as Guinevere is concerned, his sexual orientation immediately disqualifies him from excellence in masculinity or masculine impersonation. He becomes, in her eyes, a coward; he loses his noble status and resembles that despised category, the weak or ineffectual man.

One has to wonder at this point if this accusation would ever have been made amongst men, or if it would have occasioned the same outburst from Lanval. Fellow knights might be more tolerant, or even indifferent, perhaps because they do not necessarily see themselves as the objects of his desire. Men seem to like and admire Lanval, especially once he is rich. Guinevere, on the other hand, feels personally implicated in Lanval's desire, and she therefore strikes back at him as best she can. Why then does she not use the accusation of boy loving when she denounces him to Arthur? She clearly knows, or thinks she knows, a

lot about men who prefer boys. Does she think Arthur does not? Is she afraid that this one “flaw” would not be enough to provoke a trial and public disgrace? Had Lanval been less than beautiful, not quite so noble and accomplished, would anyone really have cared about his sex life? Guinevere does care, however, and the accusation, coupled with the charge of cowardice, succeeds in enraging Lanval. His response to Guinevere’s charge is an indication of his outrage and the language used recalls similar formulae in other accusations of sodomy: “‘Dame’, dist il, ‘de ce mestier / ne me sai jeo niënt aidier’” (My Lady, he said, I don’t know a thing about that sort of profession or how it works [148, 293–294]). “Mestier” again implies some sort of exchange of services for goods.⁶⁵ Even for Lanval, sodomy, or sex with boys, is associated with the purchasing of services. Whatever it is that he feels or does, with partners of either sex, he seems not to recognize himself in the broad strokes of Guinevere’s calumny.

Like so many other young knight/victims unhappy in love, Lanval is first tempted by suicide (“c’est merveille qu’il ne s’ocit” [150, 348]) but he follows Narcissus’ example instead and consents to wasting away (“Molt fu pensis, taisanz e muz; / de grant dolor mustre semblant” [152, 362–364]). Again like Narcissus, he is blamed by his fellow knights and the narrator for having given way to a “fole amur” (154, 412) and his status as foreigner continues to weigh against him. Even his judges at the trial refer to him as that “franc hume d’altre país” (noble man from another country [154, 431]). He is only saved by the last-minute appearance of his fairy lady, but even his salvation is set in very ambiguous terms. His only victory is to leave this court that has betrayed him, to disappear from sight in death or into the other world. As he is exonerated of wrongdoing, his fairy apparition beckons.⁶⁶ Lanval jumps up behind her on the horse and together they travel to Avalon.⁶⁷ This flight from his oppressors is both a victory and a defeat.⁶⁸ He may never see them again, and in this sense, the ending is positive; but as often occurs in *Marie de France*, there is a hint of trouble. The narrator describes him in flight as “raviz” (kidnapped, raped), the same word used to describe Guigemar’s voyage to the other world. The connection between death, disappearance, and heterosexuality is ominous and alerts us once again to the signs of a persecutory mentality at work.⁶⁹

Bisclavret, the last *Lai* I will discuss, stands apart from the others, though male sexuality continues to play a central role in the narrative. For one thing, it does not really concern the supernatural in the same sense as *Guigemar*, *Lanval*, and *Yonec*. There are certainly queer goings-on but they do not involve the intrusion of death into life or the passage between this life and the other that figures in many Celtic tales.⁷⁰ Instead, the queer nature of *Bisclavret* is ascribed to a natural phenomenon. In the past, the prologue tells us, men often turned into werewolves, and all feared the forest because these hybrids were known to devour men (“humes devure” [116, 11]). *Bisclavret*, the subject of this *Lai*, is a nobleman, an upstanding baron who loves his wife and is the favorite of his lord as well (“de sun seigneur esteit privez” [116, 19]). His problems only begin when his wife demands information on where he goes and what he does during his weekly three-day disappearances. At first he declines to answer, as he fears the loss of her love and, more significantly, the loss of his own self: “Mals m'en vendra, se jol vus di;/ Kar de m'amur vus partirai / e mei meismes en perdrai” (Harm will come to me if I tell you; for I will leave behind you and my love [or: I will send you away from my love] and [I] will lose my very self [118, 54–56]).⁷¹

The baron clearly foresees the consequences of revealing what is best left an open secret. The issue of his disappearance is also explicitly eroticized from the beginning. The interrogation scene begins as a kind of seduction and is inter-cut continually with illustrations of how both wife and husband use affection to tease out information and calm one other (“acola e baisa” [hug and kiss] [118, 37–38]). The wife's first reactions upon learning that her husband is a werewolf and lives off prey in the forest are surprisingly practical. First, she must know whether he continues to wear his clothing in his beastly state, to which he responds that he goes naked (“jeo vois tuz nuz” [120, 70]). Her next, unspoken reaction is marked only by a change in her coloring. She is greatly afraid of her husband, wishes to stay away from him and wonders how she can avoid sleeping with him ever again. The plan she arrives at involves enlisting the aid of another knight/admirer. Together they will steal the husband's clothing from his forest lair, even as they know that their action will condemn him forever to a life in the wild. Without the physical markers of his class and identity in this hierarchical, feudal society, *Bisclavret* loses wife, home, protector, and status.

Once the deed has been done, Bisclavret the man ceases to exist. Speechless, naked, and betrayed, he retains some sense of his former identity but, as with other knightly figures we have seen in the *Lais*, this identity is his private secret.⁷² To outside observers he is just a beast. Along with his loss of social identity comes also a symbolic castration, something of a paradox when we consider that the sexual side of man was traditionally considered his bestial, dangerous nature.⁷³ Without the attributes of masculinity afforded by his clothing and their connotations, Bisclavret also loses in banishment his access to the phallic function. As he ceases to be dangerous – no devouring of men that we know of – his wife appears ever more treacherous. Unless devouring is meant in a sexual sense, an interpretation that would not after all be inconsistent with Bisclavret's association with transgression, he ceases to appear phallic at all, despite his associations with nature and the bestial, while his wife takes on that function.⁷⁴ It is she who is identified with mastery, exercising agency within the restrictive terms of the symbolic order. As she emerges as the phallic prosecutor of difference, Bisclavret is victimized, imprisoned, capable of signs but not of speech (à la Philomena), decidedly queer.

The queerest feature of all is his goodness. Where is the werewolf who devours men in his "rage" and does great damage to everything around him, as promised by the prologue? Either Marie is inconsistent or Bisclavret, looking as he does, is being blamed for all sorts of damage that may not be of his doing. According to Claude Seignolle, werewolf stories were most popular during periods of harsh famine and great political and religious persecution.⁷⁵ If so, Bisclavret begins to look set up, another communal victim. His difference makes him an object of fear, but needlessly so. Here is a werewolf who harms no one, has excellent manners, and is beloved by his lord. We assume that his appearance and exclusion from discourse are what mark him as abnormal and therefore frightening; but, in fact, Marie never actually describes how he looks as a werewolf or whether he speaks in some language that no one can understand.⁷⁶

The meeting with the King during the hunt in the forest is the decisive moment in the tale. After one year of living as a beast, Bisclavret has been scented by the King's hounds. Chased in hot pursuit, the beast runs straight to his supposed persecutor, the King, and genuflects before him.

The King is moved by his sentence and brings him back to court, where he soon acquires a certain status as the Lord's favorite. Now, we know already from the opening of the tale that he enjoyed this same status in human form, prior to his metamorphosis ("De sun seignur esteit privez" [116, 19]) and that he was generally beloved by the community ("de tuz ses veisins amez" [116, 20]). His beastliness just lets him return, unattached, to the all-male ambience of knighthood. He can now spend his day at court and sleep among the other knights, close to his Lord. In fact, it is evident to all how deeply these two love one other. Only when he attacks the conspirators, his wife and her new husband, does he show any signs of "rage" and that is immediately explained away. The King maintains his innocence, and the narrator also intervenes to justify his hatred and thirst for justice. When the King's inquisitors inform him that the woman the beast has attacked is the wife of the knight he once loved so much ("Ceo est la femme al chevalier / que tant suliëz avoir chier" [128, 251–252]), she is subjected to torture and subsequently reveals her part in the dastardly plan to deprive her husband of every vestige of his humanity. She is forced to return his purloined clothing to the King, who then presents it to Bisclavret.

But the Beast shows no interest in clothing. Only when an attendant explains to the King that he is shy about dressing in public does the King think to shut him alone with his clothing in the bedroom, just to see what will happen. When the King returns a few moments later with his attendants, they find Bisclavret asleep on the King's bed. In a gender reversal that recalls Guigemar on his magic bed, the sleeping knight is awakened by the kiss of the handsome King: "Sur le demeine lit al rei / truevent dormant le chevalier. / Li reis le curut embracier; / plus de cent feiz l'acole et baise" (On the King's very own bed they find the knight sleeping. The King ran to embrace him; he kisses and caresses him more than a hundred times [130, 298–301]).

The King returns to the knight all of his property and drives the now noseless wife and her treacherous husband from the kingdom. She and all her female progeny will suffer for her offence and Marie closes the tale with assurances that all we have heard is true. This is a remark worth noting since it is the only one of the twelve *Lais* which ends with such a statement. Generally, Marie asserts that she has told the tale in a true manner, i.e., faithful to her source. Only in *Bisclavret* does she assert

that the *aventure* itself is true rather than her telling of it: “L’aventure qu’avez oïe / Veraie fu, n’en dutez mie. / De Bisclavret fu fez li lais / Pur remembrance a tuz dis mais” (The story you have heard was a true one, have no doubts. The *lais* was composed about Bisclavret so that his story will be remembered forever more [132, 315–318]).⁷⁷

What I find remarkable about Bisclavret is that though Marie never evokes sodomy, homoeroticism is omnipresent. If we read across the collected *Lais*, moreover, we can easily trace this topos of the man who does not want to marry right through to Bisclavret. I can easily imagine the werewolf as Tristan with his savior, the King, as Marc. He is, like Tristan, found in the forest, instantly becomes the favorite, and from the time of their meeting there is no hint of marriage on either man’s part. Bisclavret’s frequent absence from the foyer in his earlier human incarnation could be taken as a sign of an illicit sexual identity, the wolf as sexual adventurer. The young knight supposedly spent his “away” time running in a metaphorical underworld in which men devour other men and no one dares to tread. In fact, this terrifying forest turns out to be the royal hunting ground, the playground of the King. The King appears to be unmarried, or at least if he is married, the Queen merits no mention. Like all good kings, he sleeps among his men, again like Tristan and Marc, and status at court is determined by how close you get to him. This king cherishes his Beast like Marc did his nephew. His forest, like the Morois, is a site of sexual subversion. Hunting retains its dubious associations with sodomy, or at least non-productive chivalry, and it is in a forest meeting between the two men that the homosocial bond is renewed.

The parallels come to an end, however, at the moment that we must compose our own ending to the *lais*. Bisclavret is reinstated as a knight and landowner, but does he marry again? Does he leave the King’s side and their idyll of telepathic complicity? Any answer to that question must consider again the performative nature of knighthood⁷⁸ with its two-pronged criteria of service: excellence at arms and devotion to a lady, one feeding the other. Can a knight who is neither in love with a lady, nor interested in being in love, nor up on his arms, continue to be known as a knight?⁷⁹ Chrétien de Troyes’s Erec is reduced to a bully as he tries to re-establish his reputation and Tristan becomes an outlaw and a threat to the very system he is meant to be serving.

Bisclavret sees his identity disintegrate once he is distanced from his courtly attributes and Guigemar is sent off for "retraining." Enforced absence from the courtly milieu is usually intended to be an initiatory period during which the heterosexual identity will "take," as in the case of Guigemar. But Bisclavret only takes up the fragments of his former self when his wife has been banished; and that identity is by then so imbued with homosocial affection that it shows no signs of veering toward heteronormative knighthood. I would argue that Bisclavret opens a fissure in heterosexist discourse that is only contained by our prior reading, our own horizon of expectation. The homoeroticism so present in other romances is for once not written over with a heterosexual imperative. In *Guigemar* and *Lanval* we saw loners who spurned sexual relations but claimed as their defense the existence of fantasy female lovers. These lovers appear only when the protagonists absent themselves from the collective, in moments of solitude and secrecy, and they only actualize at the end of the tale, under pressure.

Bisclavret dispenses with such fantasy narratives. His absence in the forest produces no fairies but a king, his former supporter. There is no imperative to secrecy and no intrusion of women into the homosocial space. Apparently men can love their favorite beast without incurring censure. Instead of the rush to heteronormativity that mar(k)s *Guigemar* and *Eneas*, the last image of Bisclavret shows him in bed, with another man, rescued by his King's kiss, richly rewarded. No other medieval tale offers such an overt escape from the controlling structures of gender. If, as Sharon Kinoshita has argued, Marie de France "imagines an outside to the feudal order that relegates women to the status of objects of exchange underpinning the patriarchal system," then that outside allows not only for a space of feminine self-determination but also one of masculine identity beyond patriarchal definition.⁸⁰ *Lanval*, *Guigemar*, and *Bisclavret* suffer, and may actually lose in the long run in their quest to redefine gender and sexual norms, but their struggle is recorded. Few medieval authors went so far in constructing a queer love story as did Marie de France.

Writing the self: Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae*

It is *the power apparatus itself* which, in order to reproduce itself, has to have recourse to obscene eroticisation and phantasmatic investment . . . power relies on its “inherent transgression” . . . *overidentifying* with the explicit power discourse – *ignoring* this inherent obscene underside and simply taking the power discourse at its (public) word, acting as if it really means what it explicitly says (and promises) – can be the most effective way of disturbing its smooth functioning.¹

What Hegel already hints at, and Lacan elaborates, is how this renunciation of the body, of bodily pleasures, produces a pleasure of its own . . . the exercise of the Law itself becomes libidinally cathected . . .²

In an essay on Lacan, “From Reality to the Real,” Slavoj Žižek discusses a novel by Robert Heinlein, *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag*, in which a private detective is hired to learn what happens to the said Mr. Hoag each day as he disappears into the non-existent thirteenth floor of a New York high-rise.³ Mr. Hoag, as it turns out, is a “plant” from another realm who has located, during his stay in New York, some minor defects in earthly creation. While these defects are being repaired, Mr. Hoag warns the private detective, the functioning of the world will be temporarily interrupted. Though the detective may circulate in his car just as he normally would, he is instructed never to open his window. Of course our hero succumbs to such irresistible temptation and there follows the description of the world beyond:

Outside the open window was no sunlight, no cops, no kids – nothing. Nothing but a grey and formless mist, pulsing slowly as if with inchoate life. They could see nothing of the city through it,

not because it was too dense but because it was – empty. No sound came out of it; no movement showed in it.

For Žižek, this grey mist, emblematic of nothing, is the perfect analogue to the Lacanian Real, “the pulsing of the presymbolic substance in its abhorrent vitality.”⁴

This allegorical play of inside and outside, of surface and depth, recalls one of the most influential works of medieval fantasy, Alain de Lille's infamous *De planctu naturae*. Alain's fantasy begins in much the same way as Heinlein's: like Mr. Hoag, the diegetic narrator takes it upon himself to diagnose the cause of Nature's malfunction and to put things right. Nature herself appears to him, in the person of a noble lady, to concur with his diagnosis and explain away the imperfections in her own handiwork. Through their combined reasoning, the reader, like the detective above, is counseled to stay within the diegetic construct of the text as Nature and the dreamer paper over, layer with imagery, the surface of any opening which would suggest a beyond to creation. Nature's appearance highlights from the beginning the logical inconsistencies in Alain's project. She is the creator of the world, in some way external to it, and yet contained within its imperfection. Though she and the narrator single out sodomy as the principal source of natural corruption, it is clear that “sodomy,” “Nature,” and nature's “creation” all remain within the same symbolic confines; and that “sodomy,” as a product (or subset) of creation, is, following Hegel's notion of “negation of negation,” insufficient to negate it. True negation can come only from outside the system, an “outside” that is hinted at only in the narrative construction of the text itself. First, there is the pre-dream prologue, in which the narrator decries sodomy; then there is the “within” of the dream, containing the dialogue of Nature and dreamer, and a brief post-dream epilogue; and finally, that beyond of narration, only vaguely alluded to as something behind the torn dress of Nature, which has affinities with Heinlein and Žižek's “grey mist of nothingness.”⁵

This beyond of the dream construct comes up during one of the testier exchanges between Alain's dreamer/narrator and Nature. The narrator has been given license to put to this lady any question, “without check or barrier” (142).⁶ Ignoring civilities, he zeroes in on a very visible flaw:

I wonder why some parts of your tunic, which should approximate the interweave of a marriage, suffer a separation at that part in their connection where the picture's phantasy produces the image of man.⁷ (142)

Instead of implicating the questioner in the crime, he also being a man, Nature answers simply:

as we have said before, many men arm themselves with vices to injure their own mother and establish between her and them the chaos of ultimate dissension; in their violence they lay violent hands on me, tear my clothes in shreds to have pieces for themselves and, as far as in them lies, compel me, whom they should clothe in honor and reverence, to be stripped of my clothes and to go like a harlot to a brothel. This is the hidden meaning symbolized by this rent – that the vesture of my modesty suffers the insults of being torn off by injuries and insults from man alone.⁸

Nature's claim that men have been attacking their mother in order to take a piece for themselves sounds both like incestuous rape and a relics raid on a saintly cadaver. But, as we shall see, this act of maternal rape is further conflated with sexual acts between men since, according to Nature's argument, men who have sex with men are also simultaneously laying violent hands on their mother. In attacking her (as the representative of Law), we are told that man "unmans" himself and becomes in the process a "she."⁹ Thus the perpetrator is assimilated to a woman raping her mother, now figured as a male sex partner: a curious chiasmus indeed, since both sides of the figure are coterminous (a man attacking his mother is also a "she" attacking another male). It is no surprise then that the text is often discussed as one of the slipperiest of its age (*c.* 1155) and that no definitive interpretation has emerged.¹⁰ Given the widely diverging interpretations and the complexity of its own architecture, I propose to follow Alain's own prescribed reading and writing practice: push the word to its allegorical and etymological limit, chart the text's assaults on its own logic, and read it against the grain.

As a fantasy about a dream about an apparition, the *De planctu* does not lend itself easily to those seeking clarification of dogma. If Alain had intended to produce a purely didactic text, he must surely have realized that his curious rhetoric would ensure that it remained unread

or misinterpreted beyond the confines of an enlightened cabal. His particular fantasy suggests rather a more personal vision – both in the sense of a dream or daydream, as in a correction of reality, and in the more abstruse psychoanalytic sense in which fantasy serves as the underlying structure of reality.¹¹ According to Žižek, a fantasy must remain implicit rather than explicit; must “maintain a distance towards the explicit symbolic texture sustained by it, and . . . function as its inherent transgression.”¹² It appears that one of the ways in which Alain’s narrator maintains such a distance toward the symbolic texture (or Law) that it sustains is precisely by staging a pseudo-abandonment of reason. Thus, what is revealed within the dream is claimed as support for the Law, while its transgressive underside is disavowed. The fantasy seems to be beyond the Law since it records the narrator’s encounter with the unconscious; yet the context and content of the fantasy are the very stuff from which that Law acquires its disciplinary force. The staged dream, in the form of inherent transgression, is just a ploy to reinforce that Law, is itself a form of the Law in anamorphosis, since, girded by reason, it concludes with a call to discipline transgressors.

Alain’s disciplinary fantasy is, however, far from watertight. The gaps and fissures it highlights between the dream and consciousness, the Symbolic (inside) and the Real (outside), death and life, sleep and waking, heaven and earth, woman and man, are reinforced through ambiguity and temporal shifts. In this sense, they are the key to locating authorial intention and perhaps even reception. Our attention is first focused on those gaps in the previous citation concerning the tear in Nature’s tunic, but they surface throughout the text as a chain of transcriptions. We begin with the vision of a dreamer (let us call this the unconscious), then the ordering of that vision by the narrator (the work of the conscious mind), and finally the act of inscription performed by the absent author (presumably Alain de Lille). Within, or behind, this text, we are led to imagine the body of Nature, a body clothed and given delineation by the garment or text, but never seen. This absent body, the dreamer’s fantasy of plenitude, which speaks as the support for the Law, is curiously absent. Where we look for Lady Nature behind the surface of textual description we find instead only Alain’s own fantasy: Alain as writer/preacher/defender of tradition/dispenser of discipline, speaking for and through her. Medieval texts frequently sexualize the

acts of reading and writing by figuring the text as a (female) body and the allegorical dressing and undressing of that body as an act of masculine prerogative.¹³ Alain's text is very much in that tradition, a tradition which, through his example, was given new impetus.¹⁴ But in the case of Alain, that female body serves as another layer of texture, masking the masculine subject. Such a reading clearly calls into question the teleology of the *De planctu*, the struggle it enacts between private and institutional discourse, Alain as man and as spokesman. Alain as Lady Nature in drag is hardly supported by his own writings on the topic either. He actually condemns cross-dressing in this scene from the *Anticlaudianus*, where Venus bemoans her progeny as she prepares to die:

Now my arms lie idle, my arms through which Achilles, counterfeiting a girl in his degenerate clothes, was once overcome and yielded. The descendant of Alceus, degenerate in arms, exchanges his staff for a distaff, his arrows for a day's supply of wool, his quivers for a spindle and basely unsexed himself completely in womanish action.¹⁵ (211)

But this identification of Alain with Nature is also hard to argue against. The elaborately dressed and loquacious figure who comes to the aid of the poet/narrator as he is decrying improper grammatical and sexual couplings, surely acts as a support to his fantasy of purity and corruption and speaks as his double. But in the ensuing question-and-answer session, this identification is problematized as the dreamer/narrator seems keen to provoke his esteemed visitor with trick questions about desire and same-sex love in classically inspired texts.¹⁶ Only at the end of the text do we learn to what extent we have been drawn into a multilayered voyeuristic trap, a structuring device which undercuts the serious message Alain claims to have to been imparting. The dreamer peers beneath a gap or tear in Nature's dress; his alter ego, the narrator/poet, watches on and inscribes himself in the act of gazing; and we, the unwitting voyeurs, are encouraged throughout to invest a sleeping man's vision with a mantle of reality that is only lifted, rhetorically, in the final sentence. It is never even clear who is speaking, unless one chooses to accept Alain's fiction entirely on its own terms. According to the logic of the text, it has no author. The narrator contends that he forgot his dream upon waking; but if that is so, who could have remembered it to tell? Is this retrospective imaging, the raving of

the unconscious, or the intrusion of a third-party voyeur who speaks for the narrator? As the sole witness to the forgotten events, only the interlocutor could recount what has ensued, and that interlocutor, Lady Nature herself, must therefore also be the author, Alain de Lille. The dreamer, often conflated with the narrator and with Alain, is, in fact, more likely the text's intended public, that every-man/monk for whose instruction it may have been intended.¹⁷

Before returning to these preliminary issues, I want to survey three major areas in which the gaps in Alain's text are most evident. As Jan Ziolkowski has shown, Alain's work, as original and even bizarre as it seems, is not the anomaly it was once thought to be.¹⁸ Alain clearly had familiar models from which to work, most notably Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia* and the bulwark of Neoplatonic thought.¹⁹ It is therefore significant that he chose to stray from his models at key moments to include strikingly incongruous elements or to highlight rhetorical excess to the point that his text could appear absurd, obsessive, and/or ironic.²⁰ Though these topics overlap and recur throughout the text, I want to isolate and discuss them separately as: clothing and art, grammar and rhetoric, gender and reproduction.

CLOTHING AND ART

Despite the text's criticism of vainglory, the narrator of the *De planctu* pays an extraordinary amount of attention to hair and dress. The major allegorical figures (Nature, Genius, Truth) come in for extensive fashion commentary that also doubles as the outline of an aesthetic theory. If for Plato the work of art was already three steps from the "natural," Alain insists on an even further remove from the divine model. Each of these figures is clothed in magnificent robes onto which are embroidered, or projected, intricately detailed illusions of the bounties of the natural world. The narrator is fascinated by such display and, after introducing the figures, spends most of his time "reading" these ekphrastic images for his audience. This aspect of the text has led commentators to suggest that it might even have been written with pedagogy in mind. Ziolkowski, for instance, claims that the insistence on grammatical metaphors betrays Alain's didactic intent and that Nature's dress allowed him a way to map out the workings of the trivium and explain

its terminology.²¹ If the text is to be taken as a manual of instruction, though, it is hard to imagine why Alain would take sodomy as the pretext for such instruction. Ziolkowski argued that “the metaphors enabled Alan to skirt outright discussion of topics such as sexual orientation which he deemed too risqué for open discussion,” but I remain unconvinced.²² The metaphors are certainly clear enough to be comprehensible once the grammar has been taught; and they would, even before then, have incited an awful lot of unwanted curiosity.²³ If, on the other hand, it was meant as a serious moral allegory, then it would appear that Alain was a loyal Derridean: in the *De planctu* writing precedes speech. What his characters wear is more important than what they say, and what they say depends for interpretation upon a prior reading of their garments. This interplay of text (speech, core meaning) and commentary (dress, frame) is not unique to Alain either. It is part of a larger aesthetic of manuscript interpretation that takes seriously textual play between frame and image, periphery and center, even when the peripheral commentary seems disruptive.²⁴

Alain's disruption of the ordering of these hierarchies is more radical than most of his contemporaries and prefigures similar postmodern practices associated with Derrida, Butor, or Duane Michals.²⁵ Not only does the signifier (his frame: the pictorial image of the dress) take temporal precedence over the signified (the topic, the meaning) but it also almost completely obscures what it pretends to illuminate (the body beneath the dress) by merging with it. The metonymic dress (as in “the skirt that done him wrong”) as commentary is, in turn, subordinated to the narrator's own interpretive reading practice whereby what Nature wears and what she says is filtered through him.²⁶ Let us begin then by running this film backwards so as to subvert whatever supposed progression toward truth emerges through the ordering of appearances in the text.²⁷ Truth makes an appearance as a character only at the very end of the final prose section (no. 9), just before the narrator tells us that everything recounted thus far was but a forgotten dream. She is tellingly identified only as the “offspring of the generative kiss of Nature and her son” (217), born when the eternal Idea greeted Hyle (chaos) to beg for the mirror of forms.²⁸ With that heady introduction, the narrator moves right on to what really interests him most about her – her dress.

It is the last described and is particularly significant for the way in which it prepares his conclusion. Unlike all the other garments described to this point, Truth's garment clings. Using his favored rhetorical terminology, Alain tells us that there is no dieresis (or separation) between the dress and the body beneath it.²⁹ While the gap in Nature's dress promised a tantalizing view of something within or behind, the body of Truth is partially visible to the viewer: "Other garments, like additions to nature and appendages to those previously mentioned, now offered a glimpse to the viewer, now stole away from the eyes' pursuit" (218).³⁰ The body appears substantial, suggests that there is something there beneath the covering, when in fact all we see is the body adorned, skin as dress, or dress as skin. Alain was clearly familiar with literary theories that suggested that the text is always an *integumentum*, an attraction to the eye that must be pierced or removed before the astute reader can arrive at the truth behind representation. Nature had earlier warned the dreamer that poets "cover falsehood . . . so that the outer layer . . . can be discarded and the reader find the sweeter kernel of truth hidden within" (139).³¹

Whether Alain shares Nature's faith is, however, debatable. He delights throughout the *De planctu* in calling attention to the ephemeral nature of his *integumenta* and rarely does his narrator get beyond the flashy clothing to show us anything more substantial. His conclusion even suggests that the text we have read is but another of these marvelous screens onto which have been projected the insubstantial musings of a febrile dreamer: "Accordingly, when the mirror with these images and visions was withdrawn, I awoke from my dream and ecstasy and the previous vision of the mystic apparition left me" (221).³² Any medieval reader would know better than to trust a mirror. Furthermore, if the vision of the mystic apparition really was revoked, gone with the mirror which contained it, what have we just read? Is truth really just the envelope which makes us believe in the letter, a fantasy that subtends an unsubstantial symbolic?³³

Genius, the son of Nature, and father of Truth, wears several dresses during his two brief appearances at the end of the narrative. In fact, it is almost impossible to count his many outfits since they transform continuously as the narrator observes him. He arrives on the scene quite suddenly and with little fanfare after Nature has made a first pledge to

eradicate those who perpetuate vice. On the first occasion, he wears what looks to be a modest, rather coarse gown, but which almost instantly transmutes into a much finer woven dress. Both bear images of marriage that have faded with age under the black deposits of time. The narrator nonetheless picks out a book within one of the images and in that book he can make out “in faint outline” a socially and religiously sanctioned portrait of marriage practices, from the betrothal to the nuptials and the party after (197–198).³⁴ That is to say, within the art object before us, here a written text, we find the verbal representation of a dress and on that dress there is an image and within that image there is a book and that book contains within it other images. This is *mise-en-abîme* on a grand scale, six times removed from the Platonic or divine form.

In his second appearance, Genius’ dress is even more amazing. It changes color continually, from purple to hyacinth, scarlet to white. The images that appear on it fade almost instantly, too quickly even to be apprehended by the viewer. Alain is stressing not only the passing of time but, more importantly, the ephemeral nature of visual representation and the instability of interpretation. How can anyone get beyond the image (the dress) to the truth (the body) when the process of representation is so accelerated? And who is to say that the body beneath is not changing along with it? If the image of marriage is meant to suggest the true and original reproductive bond in Nature’s plan, then why insist on its being a two-dimensional representation almost hidden under the grime of time? It may work for the allegory to say that marriage has been obscured by man’s negligence but it hardly works as a didactic tool. Alain’s ambiguous portrayal actually plants the suggestion that marriage is nothing more than a social construct like so many others, subject to degradation in the sublunary world: a faded human representation rather than an abjected divine model.

In fact, originals of any kind are conspicuously absent from Alain’s text. All is representation or rhetoric, usually interchangeable. Nature asks the narrator why he “clothes” his interrogation about classical poetry and homoeroticism in the garment of inquiry (139) and refers to her own answers as “drawing the cloud of silence” (141) and “unfolding the light of truthful narrative” (141).³⁵ The “artisan” (“opifex,” “artifex”) of the universe “clothed all things in the outward aspect befitting their natures”

(145).³⁶ Genius, the scribe, draws images of things “that kept changing from the shadowy outline of a picture to the realism of their actual being” (216).³⁷ As all proceeds from representation, reality is simply a matter of believing what you see. Thus, on Generosity’s dress we find a picture “unreal but credible by reason of the sophistic delusion inherent in painting” (203). Humility and Chastity are also “inscribed” with “invented stories” (198, 204).³⁸ If we are not to believe the “sophistic delusion” and “invented” stories of these dresses, why then should we believe that the book of marriage or anything else inscribed on the dress is any more original or authoritative?

As one would imagine, Nature’s dress is the most extensively described and the most problematic. Her dress is not the world as we know it but a select representation of that world, even an imperfect one, since it has already been ripped. Elaborately decorated, it serves as a selective encyclopedia of natural history; yet some of these illustrations raise more questions than one would expect from forms emanating from God. Nature’s dress swarms with deviants and profligates: the beaver, a self-castrator; the bear, who gives birth through her nose; the ram, whose “plurality of wives robbed marriage of its dignity”;³⁹ and the lion, who lights the spark of life in his child by murmuring in his ear. Nature’s shoes are more akin to boots than sandals; her underwear contains a smiling picture of herbs and trees bringing forth buds, or so the narrator must surmise since he dares not ask and cannot see through the one hole in the fabric. The whole presentation is compared to a “stage-production offering representations of animals” (104).⁴⁰

Among the birds, the nightingale laments her loss of chastity, the meadow pipit takes as her own the offspring of the cuckoo, the bat is a hermaphrodite (92–94). Others are thieves, bullies, shameful, violent, disloyal and so filthy it would seem “that nature was drowsy when she fashioned [them]” (85–94).⁴¹ To include the fish within the edifice, the dress gives the impression of color reflected on water, and the fish themselves, “exquisitely imprinted on the mantle like a painting” (98), only appear to be swimming.⁴²

Her diadem as well, is self-consciously mimetic. In the very first stone, the narrator can pick out “the pleasantly deceptive picture [that] showed the image of an image of a lion” (78).⁴³ In the first stone of the second

row he sees the “impression” of tears and of “imaginary weeping” (79); in the second, Capricorn wears “a tunic of faked fleece of goat-hair.” On the third row there is a “vision of roses” and Pisces swims in another imaginary river.⁴⁴ Ziolkowski suggests that we shouldn’t make too much of all this since “animals, as irrational creatures, cannot be faulted for the irrational conduct which is their lot.”⁴⁵ Still, we are being invited to make something of these figures, to find some meaning in them. Alain has deliberately chosen to illustrate Nature’s dress with images of a profligate and largely uncontrollable creation.

To return to our opening discussion, Nature explains the rip in her dress as the effect of men’s violence, acts which have “stripped [her] of . . . clothes to go like a harlot to a brothel.”⁴⁶ But Nature is certainly not stripped of her clothes when we meet her and would surely be overdressed for a brothel. Her dress’s spellbinding illusions are essential to her message, though we later learn that the entire vision has been nothing more than a mirror reflection. Mark Jordan improves on that description,⁴⁷ calling it instead a “*trompe-l’oeil* tapestry” that hides, or pretends to hide, a deeper and different truth. In fact, Alain uses the topos of the *integumentum*, or literary covering, to construct a two-dimensional stage-set that is to represent what we call reality. But the attention paid to his technique alerts us, perhaps deliberately, that this reality is a plane of signifiers with no signifieds, an antimetaphysical utopia like the Japan once imagined by Roland Barthes.⁴⁸ And if there is something behind the robe that remains unseen, might not it be a simple effect of the screen, something that can only ever be seen in relation to that representational field?

GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC

For all that Alain’s grammatical and rhetorical schemes are brilliant and playful, they are also, like Nature’s encyclopedic dress, more pleasing as poetry than as logic. In such pairings as “indiscreet discretion” and “indirect direction,” we see how rhetorical excess is foregrounded. This narrator sounds like he learned to speak at Nature’s own knee. She, after all, presents herself as a figure for Lady Grammar, instructing and disciplining her pupils; and she regularly speaks in florid figures. Incongruity inevitably follows. Take, as an example, her own account of

the training of Venus, her assistant and replacement. In telling us how she warned Venus against excessive rhetoric, she continues to indulge, heavily:

Just as I decided to excommunicate from the school of Venus certain practices of Grammar and Dialectic as inroads of the most ill-disposed enemy, so too I banned from the Cyprian's workshop the use of words by the rhetors in metonymy which mother Rhetoric clasps to her ample bosom and breathes great beauty on her orations, lest, if she embark on too harsh a trope and transfer the predicate from its loudly protesting subject to something else, cleverness would turn into a blemish, refinement into boorishness, a figure of speech into a defect and excessive embellishment into disfigurement.⁴⁹ (162)

Nature does justify some use of ornamentation to avoid talking dirty, "to vulgarize the vulgar with vulgar neologisms" (143). Instead she vows to "gild things immodest" so that:⁵⁰

the dross of . . . the vices will be beautiful with golden phrases and the stench of vice will be balsam-scented with the perfume of honey-sweet words lest the great dunghill stench should spread too far on the breezes that carry it and . . . induce . . . a vomiting from the sickening indignation."⁵¹ (143)

It has been said Alain is distinguishing between tropes (*tropus*) and vices (*vitium*) in these passages, tropes being allowable while vices are not since they represent an "unpardonable aberration in aim, i.e., in the author's purpose in writing."⁵² If so, the distinctions are not all that clear and both Nature and the narrator seem caught between the two. Nature explicitly condemns some figures as metaphors of unnatural sexual practices, especially *metaplasmus* (highly irregular grammatical change), *barbarismus* (mistakes in forms of words, such as gender), and *syneresis* (contracting two syllables into one) since they suggest the mutability of all language and coupling. Yet she freely acknowledges using *anthiphrasis* and *oxymora* (meter 5, 150), rhetorical figures which, one could argue, also subvert the natural order she claims extends even to grammar.⁵³ To justify this latter point, she attempts to straitjacket grammar, instructing Venus to concentrate exclusively on the natural union of masculine and feminine gender since "the plan of nature gave specific recognition, as the evidence of grammar confirms, to two genders"

(156).⁵⁴ Yet she also goes on to admit that some men could actually be classified as of a neutral gender (156), and implicitly admits that without an exception there can be no rule.⁵⁵

This aside about a third neutral gender might sound like a joke, but it also calls attention to Nature's own violation of what she calls a natural order in using neuter-gendered nouns in her speech. Venus is instructed that her conjugations must be transitive: not stationary, intransitive, circuitous, reflexive, passive, or deponent.⁵⁶ She can deliver straight-faced a dictum such that male is to female as adjective is to noun⁵⁷ while avoiding any mention of the contradictory counterpart to her idealized relation of adjective to noun: both must be of the same gender. She insists on the conjunction of difference (as in superjacent male adjective and subjacent female noun) and calls any other conjugation an unpardonable solecism, yet then declares that "like things should be produced from like" (145) while also claiming elsewhere that Nature abhors like with like.⁵⁸ Her thinking is hopelessly muddled and almost certainly comic. Both she and her narrator revel in the very verbal constructions she says were forbidden to Venus when responsibility for creation was handed over.

This particular contradiction was not lost on readers of the *De planctu* and this might support the idea that Alain's argument did not originate with him but was part of a body of topoi in circulation which were understood to deprecate same-sex eroticism. Alain, like others, might simply have been incorporating currently fashionable arguments into his text. Several other contemporary texts note that despite Nature's dictum that she approves only of difference, adjectives and nouns agree by gender: masculine with masculine and feminine with feminine is the rule. In the *Altercatio Ganimedis et Helene*, for example, Ganymede uses just that argument in defending same-sex eroticism:

Impar omen dissidet, recte par cum pari. / Eleganti copula mas aptatur mari; / Si nescis: articulos debet observari; / Hic et hic gramatice debent copulari!⁵⁹

[Every unlike thing causes discord; like thing with like, that is what is proper. A male is joined to a male in an elegant copula. Perhaps you do not know your grammar, but the rule of articles must be observed: *hic* and *hic* must be joined together in grammar.]

This particular poem is, according to whom one reads, either a source for Alain's *De planctu*, a response to it, or another work by Alain himself.⁶⁰ In any case, it bears an intertextual link with the *De planctu* and offers a refreshing antidote to the glib contradictions of Lady Nature. Two other ecclesiastical authors condemn sodomy in the same terms as Lady Nature while at least acknowledging the contradiction. Gautier de Coincy claims in "Seinte Léocade" that grammar is not a reflection of divine law (as Alain suggests it is):

La grammaire hic à hic acouple / Mais nature maldit la couple. / La mort perpetuel engendre / Cil qui aime masculin genre / Plus que le féminin ne face / Et Diex de son livre l'efface: / Nature rit, si com moi sanble, / Quant hic et hec joignent ensamble; / Mais hic et hic chose est perdue, / Nature en est tot esperdue, / Ses poins debat et tort ses mains.

[Grammar couples *hic* and *hic*, but Nature curses this coupling. He who loves the masculine gender over the feminine will engender everlasting death and may God erase him from His book. Nature laughs, it seems to me, when *hic* and *hec* join together; but *hic* and *hic* is a lost cause, by which Nature is bewildered. She beats her fists and wrings her hands.]⁶¹

Walter of Châtillon, a contemporary of Alain and influence on him, condemned sodomy as unproductive and "grammatically perverse" and Gilles de Corbeil, another contemporary and personal physician to Philippe Auguste, similarly complained that men claim to be able to justify their behavior during coitus on the basis of grammar but that "the syntax of grammar has nothing in common with that of the grammarians."⁶²

GENDER AND REPRODUCTION

A similarly double-edged argument is rehearsed in the discussion of man as microcosm. The human body, like the universe, has, according to Nature, "similarity in dissimilarity, equality in inequality, like in unlike, identity in diversity" (118–119).⁶³ She can admit that the planets rotate in retrograde motion, contrary to the normal revolution of the stars (38) and can allow for such "contrary" behavior in a universe that reflects

divine forms; yet she turns on mankind, blaming men themselves for what has already been acknowledged as a part of their mimetic nature: "Just as any of the planets fight against the accepted revolution of the heavens by going in a different direction, so in man there is found to be continual hostility between sensuousness and reason."⁶⁴ If man's body is oxymoronic, as she herself described it (118–119), how can he be faulted for this perversity? The likening of his deviation from reason to the behavior of the planets is nonetheless attributed solely to an act of will, a "nonconformist withdrawal" (131) she calls it, and is likened, curiously enough, to a man stripping off the robes of chastity to expose himself as a male prostitute.⁶⁵

While on the topic of cosmology, we might mention Bernardus Silvestris' planetary explorations in the *Cosmographia*, a text well known to Alain and which served as one of his models. According to Winthrop Wetherbee, Bernardus modeled Nature's discourse on a speech found in Claudian's *De raptu Proserpinae* in which Jupiter reports that Nature had brought complaint against him for having disrupted the order of the Golden Age, leaving man to forage like a beast.⁶⁶ In taking over that topos, Bernardus already operated a significant shift by dispensing with Jupiter and the classical hierarchy to focus entirely on Nature, conceived in a Neoplatonic sense. Wetherbee emphasizes the heterosexual framework within which Nature's complaints were meant to be read. Nature speaks from a position of "slighted majesty," a stance familiar to readers of twelfth-century romance.⁶⁷ In the allegory of the *Cosmographia*, Nature's desire for order is likened to matter's desire for form, and both are assimilated to sexual union. Noys' response to Nature is decidedly masculinist, despite her identity as the feminine principle of creation. She emphasizes that man is created in the image of Divine Wisdom and can therefore claim jurisdiction over Nature and the natural order as his proper domain.⁶⁸ Possession and mastery are the terms within which man's relation to Nature is figured. Man's mastery of himself and of nature will alleviate dysfunction in the lower universe by righting the balance between body and soul, desire and reason.⁶⁹ Bernardus's Nature accepts the terms of this argument and goes on her way. Her complaints are only with the matter and form of the physical universe, not with the morals of men. She makes no claim to be able to pronounce

on moral guidance. That major and problematic innovation belongs to Alain alone.

In one of the most interesting scenes in the *Cosmographia*, Nature observes in the sphere of Mercury, as she travels through the upper universe, the making of hermaphrodites.⁷⁰ In Bernardus's description we can hear how the imagery could have lent itself to Alain's homophobic reading:

Mercury travels around the orbit of the sun on a closely contiguous path. . . . Because of the law which governs his orbit, he rises at times above the sun, and sometimes lurks beneath him, compliant and indecisive. Mercury does not point to the coming of misfortune in the affairs which he governs. . . . Rather, his relations with other powers vindicate or corrupt him. Joined with the madness of Mars or the liberality of Jove, he determines his own activity by the character of his partner. Epicene and sexually promiscuous in his general behavior, he has learned to create hermaphrodites of bicorporeal shape.⁷¹ (103)

Venus, who passes close by, encompasses both Mercury and the sun at certain points in their orbits. She is described as able to maintain balance between extremes of heat (male) and moisture (female) while drawing forth, by the largesse of her generative impulses, the renewal of all creatures.⁷² Bernardus's portrait of Venus would have seemed ambiguous on several levels to contemporary readers: hermaphrodite herself according to the theory of humors, she is also able to encompass both the sexually active sun and the sexually passive Mercury in her orbit. Voraciously and ambidextrously sexual, Venus is a part of Bernardus's universe, not an aberration. In the morally neutral terms which he uses, she might be seen as the true figure of human sexuality: in Freudian terms, polymorphously perverse.

Alain's Venus and Lady Nature are also somewhat ambiguously gendered, perhaps in response to Bernardus's lead. In the opening sentence of the *De planctu*, the narrator complains that Venus has turned into a monster: warring with herself, turning "hes" into "shes," unmanning men (67).⁷³ Such a description would probably not have surprised a careful reader of the *Cosmographia*. Walter of Châtillon was at the same time directing similar charges against the Anglo-Norman nobility who,

in their leisure time, forgot women and cavorted with boys instead (“hic et hec cupido”).⁷⁴ What might actually have surprised his audience more than Venus’s perversity or man’s bisexuality is Nature’s presumption. Who is this woman who is allowed to speak for God, charged as his handmaiden with policing power over creation and moral authority? No longer a simple source of raw goods, a producer, a middle manager, she has assumed priestly duties that might have surprised, outraged, or titillated readers. The transfer of power from the masculine to the feminine is, however, largely illusory. Nature still needs a supplement in certain areas for, being female, she is assumed to lack basic skills and require masculine guidance. Landing a dove-drawn chariot on earth appears to be one of those problem areas. During her descent to earth, in response to the narrator’s complaint, Nature is doubled by a male countenance that hovers above her head and guides her hand (108). In writing, as well, Nature apparently needs help: her writing-reed: “would instantly go off course if it were not guided by the finger of the superintendent” (146).⁷⁵ Even her priestly functions, her incessant preaching notwithstanding, are finally handed over to Genius, her son and alter ego, who dons sacerdotal vestments to perform the office of excommunication in the final section. In all three cases then, Nature and her function are already bipolar, bi-sexed, hermaphroditic.

Yet, if we follow Alain’s logic, her masculine guardianship still cannot save her from divagation. Though her chariot arrives on earth with no problem, she has to admit that she has not always performed so successfully. After her abdication, for example, when she passes her creative duties on to Venus, her pen goes astray and her hammer likewise cannot be trusted. In another series of mind-boggling *mises-en-abîme*, Nature is seen “calling up . . . images on slate tablets” (108) and “inscribing on a sheet of paper” (206) her order of excommunication; nevertheless, failure seems built into the enterprise of creation. The images on slate “fail to endure” (108) and Venus is even less successful than Nature once she has taken over full responsibility for the process of creation.⁷⁶ Why Nature would ever abrogate so essential a duty as creation is never satisfactorily explained, but once she has done so definitively, things predictably go further awry. Re-enacting God’s original scene of investiture, she assigns to Venus, her stand-in, two hammers, a workshop, and anvils which she will not permit to “stray . . . in any form of deviation” (156).⁷⁷ Venus is

also given a "powerful writing-pen" and suitable pages so that "she might not suffer the same pen to wander in the smallest degree . . . into the ways of pseudography" (156).⁷⁸ Soon enough pseudography asserts itself: "many youths . . . intoxicated with thirst for money" convert "Venus's hammers to the functions of anvils" (135); men hammer on anvils that bear no seeds and the poor hammer shudders "in horror of its anvil" (69).⁷⁹ Venus herself ends up sentencing the "hammers of fellowship" to "counterfeit anvils" while the "natural anvils could be seen bewailing the loss of their own hammers" (163).⁸⁰ As the accounts of monstrous deviation mount, one can only imagine what inspired all this rhetoric. Was every monastery rife with hot males hammering away on nubile anvils or is this really about Alain's own hammer, his own practice of pseudography and polyvalent logic?⁸¹

The proliferation of signs of hermaphroditism, sterility, and same-sex eroticism in the text point to something more than, though not excluding, a social referent. James Sheridan, who spent years translating Alain's works, says that "one can learn more about Alan, the man, from the *Plaint* than from the rest of his works combined"; that in it "one encounters a forcefulness, an enthusiasm and a ring of sincerity that is seldom, if ever, equaled in Alan" (33). Now why should this be? It is estimated that the *De planctu* was written when Alain was in his early thirties, a comparatively young age for an eminent theologian. Though there are over a hundred manuscript copies extant, not one of his contemporaries mentions it, even when listing Alain's other important contributions to theology.⁸² It could be that the text was known only to a small coterie of intellectuals during Alain's lifetime (only six of the manuscripts date from the thirteenth century) and that it was only after his death that it was copied and circulated across the Continent, perhaps in response to the fact that the topic had become more openly discussed and the acts more widely prosecuted. The *De planctu* is primarily a work of speculative moral fiction rather than a work of theology, and when it first appeared it might have been seen as a playful rhetorical exercise rather than a serious philosophical allegory. Others probably saw it as one of those texts that could not to be spoken of outside of a narrow circle of cognoscenti. Contemporary Penitentials frequently note that same-sex eroticism should never be talked about openly, even in condemnation, for fear of bringing to people's attention what might otherwise have

remained unconscious.⁸³ As Mark Jordan notes, such logic suggests that authorities had to admit that to at least some individuals such behavior would seem attractive rather than innately repulsive.⁸⁴ Alain himself responds to potential criticism that he is inciting same-sex eroticism by saying that if his language seems immoderate, it is simply that his indignation causes him to “belch forth” such words in the hope of restraining others (137).⁸⁵ This subtle admission that his text got away from him is nonetheless an opening into the myriad of aporias that structure the narrative.

Let us return for a moment to Alain’s recuperation and rewriting of Bernardus Silvestris’ model in the *Cosmographia*. The most striking change he effects is to reverse the gender of the protagonists. Instead of Bernardus’s wronged woman, holding forth like an Ovidian heroine or Courtly lady about the chaos of creation, Alain gives us a male poet, whining to a female about gender inversion. This poet’s first reaction, once in the persona of the dreamer, to Nature’s appearance is telling:

When I saw this kinswoman of mine close at hand I fell upon my face and stricken with mental stupor, I fainted; completely buried in the delirium of a trance, with the powers of my senses impeded, I was neither alive nor dead, and being neither, was afflicted with a state between the two. The maiden, kindly raising me up, strengthened my reeling feet with the comforting aid of her sustaining hands. Entwining me in an embrace and sweetening my lips with chaste kisses, she cured me of my illness of stupor by the medicine of her honey-sweet discourse.⁸⁶ (116)

Nature has come to comfort our poet in distress, but her relation with him, as with all of the major figures in the narration, is suspect.⁸⁷ Why does he refer to her as his kinswoman? Perhaps because they both write, are both in their own way creators? Perhaps because he sees her as a comrade in moral guidance: capable, like him, of passing judgment and advocating excommunication? Nature later refers to herself as man’s mother but in terms that suggest that she has been raped by her son. This charge complicates any reading of the love trance and chaste kisses described above. Even after having been brought to his senses, it takes a while for the narrator to grow accustomed to her presence, an odd reaction for a kinsman.

After her first instruction, the poet remains delirious, has trouble explaining his dramatic reaction to her presence: "as if by some healing potion, the stomach of my mind, as if nauseated, spewed forth all the dregs of phantasy" (126).⁸⁸ Apologizing for not having received her with more pomp, he kisses her feet and explains: "I had been struck by her appearance as by the emergence of a phantom of something anomalous and monstrous and had been deprived of my senses by the counterfeit death of a trance" (127).⁸⁹ The monstrousness of which Alain speaks is surprising in light of the descriptions that follow but, then again, Nature just may not be what he had imagined. First of all, she is hermaphroditic, possessing both a phallus (reed pen and hammer) and a womb (vellum and anvil). Secondly, we know that she and Genius, her son, are guilty of incest. They are the parents of Truth, and though their kisses are explained away in Neoplatonic terms, they still suggest illicit sexual relations. Man is accused of stirring up legal strife and civil war against his "queen" and "mother," yet Nature's own relations with the poet, with Venus, and with Genius show how problematic the conflation of those categories can be.⁹⁰ First she is Lady Grammar, disciplining her charges; then the wronged lover, bemoaning man's abdication of duty; then the patriarch, wielding her phallic reed.

It is not surprising then that her three interlocutors also suffer gender slippage. Venus wields hammers that often miss their mark: phallic female or impotent male. Genius is male but also slips into pseudography, akin to queer or non-reproductive sex. His gender needs defending by the narrator who describes him as having "no signs of feminine softness; rather the authority of manly dignity alone held sway . . ." (196).⁹¹ In a slightly later appearance his hair is said to be combed in such a way as to avoid the appearance of degeneration into "feminine softness" (197).⁹² Masculinity clearly depends here on a culturally sanctioned exclusion of the feminine, defined both as what is natural (i.e., before combing, before culture), and what is artificial (ornament, after culture, excessive shaving, tight sleeves [187]).⁹³ Gender anxiety is everywhere: like the beavers and bats pictured on Nature's robes, men are prone to gender switching, to falling back to a pre-cultural state of nature. As her creation turns toward irreparable decline, Nature blames the victim, ever in peril of slipping out of the flimsy shackles of the law:

What remains safe when treachery arms even mothers against their offspring? . . . Without shame a man, no longer manlike, puts aside the practices of man. Degenerate, then, he adopts the degenerate way of an irrational animal. Thus he unmans himself and deserves to be unmanned by himself.⁹⁴ (168)

Genius is a case in point: he is unmanned, as if against his will, in performing what are said to be his natural duties. Given the pen and the vellum on which to write, he begins composing with his right hand as his left holds the pelt. This is male rectitude at work and from his obedient pen come portraits of Helen, Turnus, Hercules, Cato, Cicero, Aristotle, and the gamut of classical figures known to educated men. When, however, Genius must switch hands for some reason, his left hand falters. "Limpingly withdrawing from the field of orthography to pseudography," he produces less stellar figures such as the liars Paris, Sinon, Ennius, and Pacuvius (217).⁹⁵ His engagement with pseudography does not make Genius a sodomite but it does identify him as a poet; and as a poet, he is already a figure of some ambiguity. His loss of mastery by definition unmans him and associates him with the less than successful productions of Venus. Yet even before his decline into pseudography, there is a blurring of values: why is Helen of Troy etched from the right hand? Helen is described elsewhere by Nature as someone deified with "godlike beauty . . . who . . . decline[d] to the abuse of harlotry when, sullyng the covenant of her marriage-bed, she formed a disgraceful alliance with Paris"; and she is linked with such unsavory characters as Pasiphae, Myrrha, and Medea (135–136).⁹⁶ One would not necessarily have expected to find her amongst the masculine elite.

Finally, we come to man and his relations with his "queen" and "mother." Nature is said to seduce "the recruits in Venus's army" (75) by offering her lips to be kissed and her arms to embrace; yet she is also said to be a virgin, never to have let Venus open the lock of her chastity.⁹⁷ This virgin mother can only offer then a simulacrum of heterosexuality. While supposedly praising straight sex, we can actually find almost no trace of the heterosexual in the text, with the exception of Venus's roundly condemned dalliance with Antigenius. Nature's arrival on earth has in fact had an opposite effect, discouraging "proper" sexual relations. Flora comes to greet her, offering "the cotton night-gown that she had

worn for her husband to earn his embraces" (112). Proserpine disdains the marital bed and leaves her husband to return to her home (12). One of the metaphors of marriage chosen by Nature to explain the union of flesh and spirit is particularly telling: she congratulates herself on having found a way that "the husband might not be disgusted by the baseness of his partner and repudiate the espousals" (118).⁹⁸ What begins then with the poet's disgust with the homoerotic becomes a disgust with eroticism in general. Lust is a form of gluttony and, regardless of the object of desire, is also already a form of idolatry (170).⁹⁹ Nowhere does Nature attempt to encourage proper hammering by making it look attractive. It is always hard work; always going bad; only worth doing for duty; and we hear virtually nothing about how reproduction is actually practiced among men, flora, or fauna.

All we can conclude is that all creation is passive in the face of Nature's hammering, despite the fact that passivity is condemned throughout the text as feminine and unseemly.¹⁰⁰ When all creation is likened to a process of imprinting or penetration, then all men carry the imprint of their mother/lover, Nature.¹⁰¹ Alain returns to this metaphor in a poem which forms the text of a monophonic musical piece, found in the *Magnus liber organi*.¹⁰² There he asserts that God himself deluded logic when he made what should be passive (created things) active (God becoming man). This passivity is emphasized in scenes in which Nature plants her first kisses, on the dreamer/poet's mouth, letting it grow into a honeycomb:

My life breath, concentrating entirely on my mouth, would go out to meet the kisses and would disport itself entirely on my lips so that I might thus expire and that, when dead myself, my other self [alter ego] might enjoy in her a fruitful life.¹⁰³ (71)

The supposed masculine possession of the feminine begins to look more like a recuperation of the feminine within masculinity, a merging of identity, a fantasy of plentitude more than an act of straight sex.¹⁰⁴ Genius, on Nature's prodding, signs the excommunication of all those who "make an irregular exception to the rule of Venus," adding that they should be "deprived of the seal of Venus" (220–221).¹⁰⁵ But this threat is tautological, emblematic of the entire argument. For a male

to receive passively the seal of Venus is already an exception to the rule of Venus, according to the metaphors used by Alain's narrator. Besides which, Venus is hardly to be counted on for meting out punishment. She, like everyone else who holds any authority in this text, has slipped up. The narrator explains away her inattention to duty by saying that the sameness of her work ended up boring her, and what a damning indictment of monogamous heterosex it is: "the frequent repetition of one and the same work bedeviled and disgusted the Cytherean and the effect of continuous toil removed the inclination to work" (163).¹⁰⁶ So Venus lost interest, Genius lost control, not being ambidextrous, and Nature brought it all on when she withdrew from the lower universe to live in what she refers to as the delightful palace of the ethereal region (34). Even the narrator acknowledges that he cannot keep his tale straight, apologizing at one point for having "wandered off in jests and jokes . . . digressed a little into the trivial" (155).¹⁰⁷ That sounds like an admission of pseudography to me. How could any of these figures be taken as authoritative when they are themselves guilty of the very excesses they pretend to despise? When the figures of sexual reproduction are so clearly incompetent, so quick to wander from the straight and narrow, how could their creation be otherwise?

That brings us to the essential question: why did Alain write this text, for whom and to what end? Several theories have been advanced: (a) Alain was a reformer and his text is a sincere polemic against sodomites in the Church. Attacks on sodomy thus reflect increased sexual activity between monks in monasteries in the mid-twelfth century;¹⁰⁸ (b) this is an attack on a specific ecclesiastical figure known to be a sodomite or written on commission to castigate such practices in a specific religious house;¹⁰⁹ (c) Alain was really interested in grammar, not sodomites, and the piece is something of a showpiece for cognoscenti; (d) this is a true Menippean satire which emphasizes form over philosophy, humor over moralism;¹¹⁰ (e) this text is actually a critique of a type of moral representation based on classical models then current in intellectual circles whose usefulness had run its course;¹¹¹ Alain adumbrates the Church's official condemnation of sodomy (1179) in this homophobic text but also recognizes the contingency of such a condemnation. As a proto-Foucauldian, he realizes that "the repression of homoeroticism is itself tinged with homoerotic desire."¹¹²

There is some truth to all of these accounts but no one of them should be taken as definitive. The last one cited, that of Scanlon, and especially as reformulated in the final sentence of his article ("This perhaps is Genius's final lesson, one he still has to teach: sexual regulation is itself a species of desire" [p. 242]), is the most convincing and the most dazzlingly argued. Nonetheless, I find myself reading it in the light of an earlier statement in his essay and come away feeling unsatisfied:

My purpose in noting these slippages is not to "out" Alain de Lille – quite the contrary. The *De Planctu*, along with Alain's other writings, and their historical context all make it clearly evident that Alain was a supporter and perhaps even an instigator of the twelfth-century Church's repression of homosexuality. What I do want to suggest is that Alain was quite self-conscious and even deliberative in his homophobia – much more so than many of his twentieth-century counterparts.¹¹³

As Žižek might say, the truth is out there but it is never to be found where you look for it. Alain's intent might well be to support a homophobic regime, to spark a broader outcry against sexual abuses in the Church, just as he took on the heretics in his later writings; but we can not know from where he speaks. Men who engage in sex acts with other men are often the most ferocious of critics of sodomy, homosexuality, and gay identity. As Scanlon himself admits, Alain "pushes the dilemma of unspeakability to its most paradoxical limits."¹¹⁴ Does he do this as part of a self-conscious poetics or in order to undermine his message? Is he speaking for himself or as the spokesman of another individual or entity? And does he do so in a manner that sets out his critique in clear terms without instigating a counter desire? After all, Alain's attacks on the heretics are not delivered in the highly literary, rhetorically tortured prosimetrum that he chose for *De planctu*.¹¹⁵ Though Scanlon's assessment of Alain may well be right, and I will readily concede that neither he nor I will ever settle the question definitively, I want to return to his judicious conclusion that sexual regulation is already a form of sexual desire, that Alain's own sexuality is implicated in his attack, and that the fantasy format in which he chose to clothe his argument betrays more than he could ever have realized or controlled.

According to Žižek, fantasy “conceals the horror (of the Real, of death, of what is beyond symbolization), yet at the same time it creates what it purports to conceal, its ‘repressed’ point of reference.”¹¹⁶ In other words, Alain’s fantasy enacts the very transgression upon which the symbolic order depends, points to the hole around which it is organized, signals the lack in the Other that it simultaneously pretends to obscure.¹¹⁷ The fantasies inherent in *De planctu* are myriad: the dream that narrates itself, a female figure of authority, talking apparitions, moving images, cinematic dresses, a poet who can actually master language and induce interpretive closure, a transcendental morality, apocalyptic justice. When Alain’s narrator tries to explain his first reaction to the apparition of Nature, it is explicitly in terms of fantasy: “as if by some healing potion, the stomach of my mind, as if nauseated, spewed forth all the dregs of phantasy” (126). Having been faced with the fallibility of Law, the dreamer’s only response is to spew forth fantasies whose purpose it is to uphold Nature, and the Symbolic order that she personifies. But, according to Žižek, these fantasies also “constitute . . . desire, provide its coordinates, . . . a schema according to which certain positive objects in reality can function as objects of desire, filling in the empty places opened up by the formal symbolic structure.”¹¹⁸ Alain’s narrator seems to be trying awfully hard to do just that – fill in the empty spaces, close up the gaps so as to exclude once and for all anything that could jeopardize his fantasy of social order, especially illegitimate forms of sexual desire. In the end, he succeeds only in calling attention to those gaps and in making abjection look glamorous.

In speculating on why that is, I want to return to Sheridan’s observation that there is more of Alain in the *De planctu* than in any of his other works. In Žižek’s reading of Lacan, the object of fantasy (or *objet petit a*) is that “something in me more than myself” on account of which I perceive myself as “worthy of the Other’s desire.”¹¹⁹ If we postulate that Alain, however unconsciously, wrote himself into the figure of Nature, saw himself as the figure who would uphold the Law, then we are seeing this mechanism at work. Lady Nature is that “she bigger than himself” through whose discourse he becomes worthy, the needed supplement to his own rhetoric. Alain the ventriloquist attempts to solidify a textual identity through the persona of Nature and the intersubjective

relation formed with the dreamer. Though he has not yet shaken off his schoolboy training and still glories in his own cleverness, there is in the *De planctu* considerable evidence of his desire to please, and to be found pleasing in several, possibly contradictory, quarters.

The identification of Alain with his fictional voices is abundantly prepared for within the text. Nature, Genius, and Venus, like Alain, are writers, to one extent or another, in a period when such a status represented learning and prestige. No contemporary could have read this text without seeing in it some reflection of, or commentary on, the writer's own persona. The text is structured as a dialogue or scene of instruction leading to mastery. Yet any expectation of finding here a standard rehearsal of doctrine or an address of consolation is quickly shattered. Alain may be evoking literary models but he is also inverting them through exaggeration. And when the dreamer is dissatisfied with Nature's responses and pushes her to justify her contradictions, he is more a double agent than a loyal subject. When, for example, Nature condemns what she calls the "heteroclite class," people who recline "with those of female gender in Winter and masculine gender in Summer," those who follow a law of "interchangeability of subject and predicate" (136),¹²⁰ the dreamer wonders aloud why similar charges are not directed against the gods who have also "limped around the same circle of aberration" (138).¹²¹ Jupiter provides one example, he who made "his wine-master by day . . . his subject in bed by night" (139). Bacchus and Apollo provide another, for they shared their father's wantonness and taste for "turning boys into women" (139). Nature responds that Gods who stray beyond her way are nothing more than the falsehoods of poets, and then adds the curious statement, coming from a poet: "[and] in this respect the poet is not found to differ from the class that shares his characteristics" (140).¹²²

This dialogue represents the point at which Nature most severely rebukes the dreamer for "clothing with the garment of inquiry a question which is not worthy to lay claim to the appearance of a doubt" (139).¹²³ It is a crucial moment in the text because only then does Nature draw a line between poetry and theology, myth and dogma, the tales of the cradle and philosophy. Her Platonic rejection of poetry leads, however, into dangerously self-referential terrain. Alain is, of course, a poet and

we are reading a poem that is subject to just the critique that Nature has offered. She claims that:

the poetic lyre gives a false note on the outer bark of the composition but within tells the listeners a secret of deeper significance so that when the outer shell of falsehood has been discarded the reader finds the sweeter kernel of truth hidden within.¹²⁴

This standard exegetical claim is also somewhat puzzling. Alain has Nature claim that “the dreams of Epicurus are now put to sleep, the insanity of Manichaeus healed, the subtleties of Aristotle made clear, the lies of Arrhius belied”: “reason proves the unique unity of God, the universe proclaims it, faith believes it, Scripture bears witness to it” (141).¹²⁵ But this rejection of fiction and embrace of reason and doctrine occurs within a poetic, principally pagan, fiction. Furthermore, the suggestion that poets share the vices of their creations, is quite daring, coming, as it does, from Alain’s own pen. It is not so much that all poets are condemned: some, Nature acknowledges, combine “accounts of historical events and entertaining fables in a kind of elegant overlay so that . . . a more elegant picture may emerge” (140).¹²⁶ But others “rave about a plurality of gods” and some of them “have passed beyond the discipline of Venus” and at that point “the shade of falsehood begins to appear” (140).¹²⁷ This latter description sounds suspiciously like Alain’s own text: a proliferation of gods in what could be taken as a textbook of twelfth-century knowledge, and a protagonist claiming that most men have transgressed upon Nature’s reproductive plan.

Alain’s defense of the poet comes shortly later, when God is described as the “skilled artisan of an amazing work of art” (144).¹²⁸ From that moment on, metaphors of art abound. Nature’s dress (creation itself, or the book of creation) is equated to a stage production and is lauded for its “skillfully deceptive art” (107);¹²⁹ Venus, “destroying herself with the connections of grammar, perverting herself with the conversions of dialectic, discoloring herself with the colors of rhetoric . . . kept turning her Art into a figure, and the figure into a defect” (164).¹³⁰ Pseudography as Art begins at the top and the dividing line between real/straight poetry and pure illusion is never neat or easy to trace. The figure of the poet, clearly subsumed within these critiques, is further implicated as mirror metaphors multiply in the final pages of the text.¹³¹

When Narcissus is first singled out from among the myriad of figures on Nature's dress it is as a tragic figure: "reflected in a reflection, [he] believed himself to be a second self . . . involved in the destruction arising from himself loving himself" (136).¹³² But this creature who seeks a second self, arguably the figure *par excellence* of the twelfth-century poet, is certainly just as apt a description of Alain and his interlocutor, Nature.¹³³ It does not take psychoanalysis to argue that a figure in a dream is in some sense a figure of the self. Yet the poet goes on to condemn Narcissus as a figure of male prostitution. Nature first says that he fell in love with what he saw "reflected in a reflection" because "his shadow faked . . . a second self" (136). Then, in a huge leap, he is compared to "other youths" whose "thirst for money" leads them to convert "Venus' hammers to the functions of anvils" (136).¹³⁴ It is doubly surprising, then, to see Nature take up this same image as she characterizes her own link with Genius: "Since like, with disdain for unlike, rejoices in a bond of relationship with like, finding myself your alter ego by the likeness of Nature that is reflected in you as in a mirror . . ." (206).¹³⁵ To hear Nature celebrating the bond of like with like, at the very close of the text, at the moment that she is about to advocate burning the sodomites with the brand of anathema, has to have struck readers of any age as anomalous.¹³⁶ When, in the final passage, the mirror of the text dissolves before the sleeping narrator's eyes, we are left to conclude that the entire exercise has been, as Jordan suggested, a deceit, a disturbance that brought with it no truth.¹³⁷

A deceit no doubt, but not one that fails to instruct. Alain's auto-deconstruction is a model of medieval reading practice. We are reminded that only the dress of truth is credited with a complete seal between signified and signifier, a fit which allows for no gap between fabric and body, surface and image. The same cannot be said for Nature or the poet. Winthrop Wetherbee once said that this text "expose[s] the inevitable failure of the aspiration implicit in the lover's response to that female beauty of which Nature is the source and model."¹³⁸ He is right about the failure of aspiration but I am surprised that he would be surprised at the failure of the feminine to hold this poet's attention. Oddly and yet fittingly, there is no "feminine" in the text capable of upholding the pretence of heterosexual orthodoxy. Though women's beauty is superior to men's, to the point that even Adonis and Narcissus must bow before

it, the dreamer declares that woman's person is despised in his time. The effect of their beauty on men is to render them impotent. When confronted with feminine beauty, Jupiter's thunderbolt lies idle in his right hand, every string of Phoebus' harp grows slack (70). In another of those startling contradictions, Hippolytus, heretofore immune to love, would sell his personal chastity to enjoy a woman's love, i.e., behave like a sodomite.¹³⁹

Nature is no lady; she is a surface, a reflection of Alain himself, and if we return to our opening quotation, Alain as much as says so: "I wonder why some parts of your tunic, which should approximate the interweave of a marriage, suffer a separation at that part in their connection where the picture's phantasy produces the image of man" (see n. 7). I take his imagery to mean just what it says. Beneath the rip in Nature's dress there is no body, but the picture's fantasy "image of man," an imaginary remnant in which the subject recognizes himself, a self conceptualized only through the intermediary of this fantasy other. When he later imagines his death through union with Nature, he evokes again this "other self/alter ego" who, he says, "will enjoy in her a fruitful life" (71).¹⁴⁰ Narcissus is the only other figure in the text who is said to have such an "alter ego," and we know that his fantasy of union with the other led straight to death. The Narcissus figure thus seems to rule paradoxically over this whole encounter with the other, dialogue with the self, this bogus scene of instruction. Alain's narrator, like Narcissus, awaits his imprint and the touch of the phallic-wielding master.

Žižek maintains that "an ideological identification exerts a true hold on us precisely when we maintain an awareness that we are not fully identical to it, that there is a rich human person beneath it: "'not all is ideology, beneath the ideological mask, I am also a human person' is the very form of ideology, of its 'practical efficiency'."¹⁴¹ Alain, seen in this light, would be a model of ideological self-delusion, thoroughly interpellated. His failure to admit to his identification, his claim to supplement the lack in the Other, haunts the text and limits its ideological force. The inability of the universe's creators to maintain order within creation is paralleled by the impotence of the writer to write truth. The more Alain denounces sodomy, the more he merges with Nature and finally dissolves, like a reflection. His dream of plenitude is a

contradiction in terms, framed, as it is, as a reflection within a vision, within a mirror.

Even the demonization of sodomy, the supposed *raison d'être* of the text, turns on something other than love of men. When sodomy is associated almost exclusively with youth, beauty, prostitution, promiscuity and lucre, then it is easy to make distinctions between what *others* do (sell themselves [72]) and what *I* do (love my friend).¹⁴² Condemning through metaphors of grammar, commercial transactions, and castration, is, in effect, a method of deferral from which the traditional arena of warrior friendships, reciprocity, and masculine bonds easily escapes censure. Listen to Alain in his *Anticlaudianus*, where masculinity serves as the standard for perfection, beauty, and fidelity. Nature's perfect body rivals those of Narcissus and Adonis; the perfect couples, those whose "chaste love, uncomplicated friendship, unclouded trust, true affection have joined together and in whose case an association of purified love has made one out of two" (73) are all male. David and Jonathan "are two but yet are one" (73); Theseus "can have no life by himself unless he has life in Pirithous" (73); Tydeus feels that he is seeking kingship for himself "when he wishes his second self (alter ego) to be king" (73); "another Nisus appears in Euryalus and another Euryalus flourishes in Nisus" (73); Pylades submits to danger "to save his alter ego from the same fate" (74).¹⁴³ Leo Bersani once defined the "straight mind" as one which valorizes difference, while same-sex desire "presupposes a desiring subject for whom the antagonism between the different and the same no longer exists."¹⁴⁴ Alain teeters between these two poles in the *De planctu* but veers toward the latter in this final citation. At the close of this listing of exemplary couples in the *Anticlaudianus*, he issues what could be seen as a "closet" warning, written some twenty years after the composition of the *De planctu*: paintings hide secrets, they enclose things in the shadow of things and beguile our eyes with artifice (74), an extraordinary admission from a man who so insistently exposed the imbrication of artifice and orthodoxy, who shows even his own self to be a rhetorical construction, Master Alain, *stupendi artificii artificiosus artifex*.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

When a modified Athusserian paradigm is brought into an intimate connection with psychoanalysis and anthropology, it provides the basis for elaborating the relation between a society's mode of production and its symbolic order. This . . . opens the possibility for understanding *how the subject is sexually, as well as economically, "captated."*¹

Saint Anselm defended his reluctance to prosecute sodomy in 1102 with the argument that it was already so commonly practiced that people would have difficulty recognizing it, or themselves within that category. Such a statement could not have been made by the end of that century, when sodomy had become a matter of discourse and persecution. In the intervening years, increased attention to celibacy, monastic rules, marriage practices, and the status of knighthood had the effect of calling attention to the performative nature of masculinity, to its ritualization and theatricalization. Institutions responded by setting up ever more rigorous criteria by which men earned, or failed to earn, their masculine status; and accusations of sodomy began to feature in these attempts to discipline masculine subjects by controlling and patrolling gender barriers. The accusations one finds in the texts discussed here had the effect of outlining acceptable parameters of behavior and establishing an outside to masculinity such that some males make it in and others clearly do not. But they also had the undeniable if unwitting effect of calling such parameters into question. The open acknowledgment of illicit sexualities and sexual acts chipped away at the notion of a single created norm and had the effect of making normative heterosexuality and masculinity, both of which took on new contours in the twelfth century, appear fragile and constructed. The more sodomy is talked

about, the more difficult to pin it down; the more an author insists on its polluting and corrupting influence, the more the normative and the disruptive seem intertwined.

Hegemonic, heroic masculinity thus became an ever more contested category, one which attracted a great deal of attention in literary, theological, and monastic texts. Systematic exclusion and denigration of the feminine was one of its cornerstones, and enhanced competitiveness between males for power and prestige was a direct effect. John of Salisbury's association of masculinity with a veneer of control and a suspicion of pleasure is one that pertained to chivalric knights as much as to monks and clergy. Signs of failure to maintain this veneer, through dress, performance, demeanor, or inappropriate sexual activity, leads inevitably to accusations of gender slippage, to humiliation, and often to the accusation of sodomy as well. Thus any knight or monk who shows less than complete regard for the established order, or who is led by personal ambition more than institutional allegiance, is liable to be ostracized, excluded, and, in many cases, sacrificed. Attacks on any class of individuals within a culture always point to deeper, perhaps unacknowledged, cultural conflicts that feed into a climate of sacrificial violence. Such a climate is attested to in the somewhat obsessive associations made between sodomy, heresy, foreign mores, and infidels that one finds throughout the century.

How does any of this relate to the essentialism/constructionism debate that plagued gender and queer theory in the 1990s? Most of these authors, including the early Church Fathers surveyed in this book, would concur, even in spite of themselves, that whatever it is that they are calling sodomy is pre-discursive, assimilable to original sin, something that lurks within us all, against which we must be vigilant, ready as it is to surface in any same-sex environment. Allied with the active/passive dichotomy on which so much medieval gender theory seems to rely, normative and perverse sexualities are caught up in games of perspective, in which foreground and background veer in and out of focus. Active and passive, like and unlike, emerge as variable and contingent categories which rely for their recognition upon subjective judgment. The grammatical and rhetorical metaphors for sexual union and proper gender favored by many of these authors purport to underwrite normative associations of masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity, but

just as often they undo these associations by suggesting that gender is performative and manipulable, an attribute of outside evaluation more than the emanation of an inner, subjective truth.

Such games of social perception are, nonetheless, the very stuff from which identities and identifications take shape, especially as they are underwritten by symbolic Law. Challenges to that Law can of course be fatal but they are also unavoidable in a sacrificial climate, as most of these authors show. Even in explicit defenses of Law such challenges surface – sometimes inadvertently, often deliberately. I am no mind reader and have no interest in making pronouncements about the authorial intentions or proclivities of medieval authors. I will, nevertheless, maintain that much of the form, and even some of the substance, of the attacks on the sodomite during this period folds back in on itself, such that these games of perspective appear necessarily ironic. It is in the gaps between authors' intentions and readers' responses that I sense the double-consciousness of these writers and the undeniable presence of a homoerotic subject. Such a subject may or may not defy (hyper)masculine paradigms; at any rate, rigid ties between acts, desires, and gender roles are nothing more than the last refuge of Law. This subject can best be intuited "not by discrete sexual acts . . . but by the enduring processes of sexual loss, longing, anticipation, and union that shape his sense of self".² In the authors I have been discussing, even the most homophobic, masculinist, and normative, we can often detect what Dinshaw called "the touch of the queer"; and in such moments of imagined communion the so-called sodomite speaks back.³

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See Ernst Curtius' short survey of "sodomy as topos" in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1953), pp. 113–117.
2. Mark Jordan traces this development beautifully in *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 29. Pre-eleventh-century silence on sodomy does not, however, translate to a lack of textual homoeroticism. See, for example, the letters of Alcuin and other scholars at the Carolingian court and the discussion in Brian McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350–1250*, Cistercian Studies Series 95 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1988).
3. Glenn Burger, "Kissing the Pardoner," *PMLA* 107 (1992), p. 1152.
4. Jordan argues that it is Peter Damian who first coined the term *sodomia*, though he notes that adjectival forms of the word can be found in earlier documents: "The central terms used by medieval Christian theologians to describe what we call 'sexual activity' cannot be translated into modern English. They condense in themselves different and in some ways briefer histories of category formation. Consider the terms *luxuria*, *vitium sodomiticum*, and *peccatum contra naturam* as they figure in Scholastic texts. It might be permissible to transliterate the last two as 'Sodomitic vice' and 'sin (or vice) against nature,' with appropriate warnings. But *luxuria*, the root term, cannot even be transliterated as 'luxury' without provoking misunderstandings each time" (Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 29).
5. Jordan says it was inevitable that the resultant category would be anything but concrete or discrete: "The essential thing to notice in the processes by which 'Sodomy' was produced is that they first abolish details, qualifications, restrictions in order to enable an excessive simplification of thought. Then they condense a number of these simplifications into a category that looks concrete but that has in fact nothing more concrete about it than the grammatical form of a general noun" (Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 29).
6. One of these diatribes is reproduced in the Prologue to this book; see also my article, "Knighting the Classical Hero: Homo/Hetero Affectivity in *Eneas*," *Exemplaria* 5, 1 (March 1993), pp. 1–43, and Simon Gaunt, "From Epic to Romance: Gender and Sexuality in the *Roman d'Eneas*," *Romanic Review* 83, 1 (January 1992), pp. 1–27.

7. James A. Schultz, “Bodies that Don’t Matter: Heterosexuality before Heterosexuality in Gottfried’s *Tristan*,” in K. Lochrie, P. McCracken, and J. A. Schultz, eds., *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 91–110. Schultz rings the right note of caution regarding the claim that heterosexuality was invented in the twelfth century when he says: “Gottfried (of Strasbourg) was writing before heterosexuality. I mean this not in the trivial sense that the term had not yet been invented, but in the more important sense that the cross-sexual relation between the desiring subject and the desirable object does not constitute either the identity of the subject or the morphology of the object in the profound way it is assumed to under a regime of compulsory heterosexuality” (Schultz, “Bodies,” p. 95).
8. Simon Gaunt, “Straight Minds/‘Queer’ Wishes in Old French Hagiography: *La Vie de Sainte Euphrosine*,” in L. Fradenburg and C. Freccero, eds., *Premodern Sexualities* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p. 158.
9. See, for example, Geoffrey’s description of a tournament from the 1130s in his *History of the Kings of Britain* (trans. Lewis Thorpe [London: Penguin Books, 1966]), Part 6, chapter 15, p. 230: “The knights planned an imitation battle and competed together on horseback, while their womenfolk watched from the top of the city walls and aroused them to passionate excitement by their flirtatious behaviour.”
10. See Michel Foucault’s *La Volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) and *Le Souci de soi. Histoire de la sexualité* 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).
11. R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1987).
12. “De bel pechié n’est pas merveille, / des que Nature le conseille, / mes qui de lei pechié s’esveille / encontre Nature tesseille. / Celui deit l’en a chiens hür, / pieres et bastons estrüer; / torchons li devriet [l’en] rüer / et con autres gueignons tüer. / Ces dames ont trové i jeu: / o dos turtennes funt un eu, / sarqueu hurtent contre sarqueu, / sanz focil escoent lor feu. / Ne joent pas a piquenpance, / a pleins escuz joignent sanz lance. / N’ont soign de lange en lor balance, / ne en lor mole point de mance. / Hors d’aigue peschent au torbout / et n’i quierent point de ribot. / N’ont sain de pilete en lor pot / në en lor branle de pivot. / Dus et dus jostent lor tripout / et se meinent plus que le trot; / a l’escremie del jambot / s’entrepaient vilment l’escot. / Il ne sunt pas totes d’un molle: / l’un[e] s’esteit et l’autre crosle, / l’un[e] fet coc et l’autre polle / et chascune meine son rossle.” (ll. 1097–1124)

[There is nothing surprising about the “beautiful sin” / when nature prompts it, / but whosoever is awakened by the “vile sin” / is striving against nature. / He must be pursued with dogs, / throwing stones and sticks; / one should give him blows / and kill him like a cur. / These ladies have made up a game: / With two “trutenes” they make an “eu,” / they bang coffin against coffin, / without a poker to stir up their fire. / They do not play at jousting / but join shield to shield without a lance. / They do not need a pointer in their scales, / nor a handle in their mold. / Out of water they fish for turbot / and they have no need for a rod. / They do not

bother with a pestle in their mortar / nor a fulcrum for their see-saw. / They do their jousting act in couples / and go at it full tilt; / at the game of thigh-fencing / they lewdly share their expenses. / They are not all made from the same mold: / one lies still and the other makes busy, / one plays the cock and the other the hen / and each one plays her role.]

Translation by Robert L. A. Clark; cited in J. Murray and K. Eisenbichler, eds., *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 210.

13. See Francesca Canadé Sautman and Pamela Sheingorn's collection, *Same Sex Love and Desire among Women in the Middle Ages* (New York and London: Palgrave, 2000) for a long-overdue survey of the topic.
14. Georges Duby, *Guillaume le Maréchal ou le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris: Fayard, 1984).
15. The northern French *Ordene de chevalerie* contains a fascinating account of the knightning of Saladin in which are outlined the ritualized and symbolic steps which had to be followed: a bath (signifying baptism), repose (Paradise), white robe (cleanliness), a scarlet cloak (blood shed in defense of God), brown stockings (burial in earth), a white belt (virginity), a double-edged sword (justice and loyalty, defense of the poor), and a dubbing or light blow from the master (presumably respect for hierarchy, humility, and obedience). This link between religious and military orders is reinforced by the four rules the new knight must obey: never consent to false judgment or be a party to treason; honor all women and aid them; hear Mass every day; and fast on Fridays in remembrance of Christ's Passion. This and other very useful examples can be found in Maurice Keen's *Chivalry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).
16. E. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).
17. The definition is from Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject*, Theory and History of Literature 55 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988): "the subject, opposed to the 'individual,' is not to be understood as 'the source and agent of conscious action or meaning,' but rather 'is immediately cast into conflict with forces that dominate it in some way or another – social formations, language, political apparatuses, and so on'" (pp. xxxiii–xxxiv). The model of competing and historically contingent ideologies that I am evoking is consistent with Althusserian models of subjectivity which stress multiple, competing ideologies rather than any one, oppressive, transhistorical force. (See also Peter Haidu, "Althusser Anonymous in the Middle Ages," *Exemplaria* 7, 1 (Spring 1995), p. 69.
18. Burger, "Kissing," p. 1154 n.10.
19. For more on secrecy, see K. Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).
20. James Creech poses these questions in relation to the letters of Herman Melville: "one must be careful not to mistake for mere rhetoric the intensely sexual longing which can be smuggled into expression using the very same language as a cover"

- (*Closet Writing/Gay Reading: The Case of Melville's Pierre* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], p. 65).
21. Allen J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet: Same-Sex Love from Beowulf to Angels in America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
 22. John Winkler, "Double Consciousness in Sappho's Lyrics," in H. Abelow, M. Barale, and D. Halperin, eds., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 577–594.
 23. Ed Cohen, "Writing Gone Wilde: Homoerotic Desire in the Closet of Representation," *PMLA* 102, 5 (October 1987), p. 812.
 24. Simon Gaunt, alludes to some of these issues in an extraordinary article, "Bel Accueil and the Improper Allegory of the *Romance of the Rose*," *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998), pp. 65–98.
 25. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
 26. It was Boswell's contention that the rise of urban centers, especially in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, also saw the rise of a visible gay culture and a relative tolerance of gay sexuality on the part of the Catholic hierarchy (*Christianity*). Paris, the major intellectual center of the twelfth century, was widely associated by authors with sodomy and sexual transgression, as was London. See also Conrad Leyser, "Cities of the Plain: The Rhetoric of Sodomy in Peter Damian's 'Book of Gomorrah'," *Romanic Review* 86, 2 (March 1995), pp. 195–196.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–73.
 28. Haidu, "Althusser," p. 71.
 29. H. Marshall Leicester associates this gap with "despair" and Judith Butler sees it as the prerequisite to mourning and the incorporation of the lost ideal, both essential to the taking up of gender. H. Marshall Leicester, *The Disenchanted Self: Representing the Subject in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1990), and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).
 30. Haidu, "Althusser," p. 73.
 31. James Creech (*Closet Writing*, p. 22) uses this formulation in discussing the role of what he calls "gay reading" in reinstating "what nineteenth-century surveillance labored so successfully to prohibit" in the works of Herman Melville.
 32. In this respect it seems particularly disingenuous to claim the silence of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics on issues of sexuality as proof that today's queer readings are reductionist, that they bring to the text localized concerns, and are simply reading into and finding in the supposedly limpid surface of the manuscript the reflected images the critic hopes to find. As this argument goes, if queer valences were not noted in the text by scholars since the Enlightenment, then they simply are not there. This argument shows enormous faith in the past and astounding naïveté as to the blinders with which we all read.
 33. As Carolyn Dinshaw asserts in the context of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a heterosexual act can serve a homosexual/homosocial function, thus implying

that such passages, in that or any other romance, must always be read (and were likely read even then) as potentially ironic. See Dinshaw, "A Kiss is Just a Kiss: Heterosexuality and its Consolations in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *diacritics* 24, 2–3 (Summer–Fall 1994), pp. 205–226.

34. David Halperin, "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality," *Representations* 63 (Summer 1998), pp. 93–120.
35. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Post-modern* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

I LOCATING SODOMY

1. This particular reference to the sodomites from Jacobus da Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (1290) (*The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. W. G. Ryan, 2 vols. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], p. 41) is itself a restatement of Peter Cantor's fantasy according to which (supposedly), in the versions of Saints Jerome and Augustine, Christ postponed repeatedly his incarnation, unwilling to enter into a human nature so defiled by vice. It was therefore only fitting that the sodomites should die at the moment of incarnation: "Iustum erat, ut auctore naturae nascente morerentur hostes naturae, non valentes sustinere adventum et splendorem ipsius" (in the Dominican compilation of scriptural glosses of the 1230s, *Hugonis Sancto Charo . . . in epistolis Pauli* [Venice, 1703], u, fol. 209rb, cited in John Baldwin, *The Language of Sex* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], pp. 44, 283 n.5). See also Warren Johansson and William A. Percy, "Homosexuality," in Vern Bullough and James Brundage, eds., *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality* (New York: Garland, 1996), p. 173.
2. McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 209.
3. Particularly relevant to this study is Simon Gaunt's point in *Gender and Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) that efforts to refigure gender were played out and resisted within the fluid literary genres of the twelfth century and that consideration of gender is crucial to any understanding of the development of those genres' reception in the following centuries.
4. According to Raymond Cormier and Harry J. Kuster, "Old Views and New Trends: Observations on the Problem of Homosexuality in the Middle Ages," *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3, 25, 2 (1984), p. 595, it was alleged both that sodomy was an epidemic (inferring lack of control) and a confirmed habit (implying responsibility on the part of the participant) picked up during the Crusades.
5. See any number of historical surveys of the history of homosexuality where literary texts are cited (sometimes problematically) as part of the historical record of homosexual practices across the centuries, e.g. Boswell, *Christianity and Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Villard Books, 1994); David A. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr, eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 1990). A much earlier outbreak of moral concern over sexual matters occurred in the

late sixth century, under the pontificate of Gregory the Great. The issue then was celibacy rather than sodomy, but, as Conrad Leyser argues (“Masculinity in Flux: Nocturnal Emission and the Limits of Celibacy in the Early Middle Ages,” in Dawn M. Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* [London and New York: Longman, 1999], p. 119), comparing the earlier reformists and those of the eleventh century: “the age of Gregory VII in many ways brought an end to the epoch of his earlier namesake. . . . A lurid rhetoric of sexual danger was used by the new Gregorians to demand, notoriously, that the ranks of the priesthood be uncontaminated by any kind of association with their lay brethren.” The upshot, as Robert Swanson (“Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation,” in Hadley, ed., *Masculinity*, p. 166) argues, may have been to mark out the celibate clergy as a “third gender,” an ambivalent position somewhere between the role played by men in sexual and property transactions and an asexual, emasculate aspiration to angelic status.

6. J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 355.
7. The Investiture Controversy was the most public attempt on the part of the Church to wrest control not only over the conferring of spiritual offices, but also over a host of other responsibilities attendant upon the clergy. See I. S. Robinson, *Authority and Resistance in the Investiture Contest: The Polemical Literature of the Late Eleventh Century* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1978) and Jo Ann McNamara, “The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050–1150,” in Clare Lees, ed., *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
8. J. McNamara and S. Wemple, “The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500–1100,” *Feminist Studies* 1 (1973), pp. 126–141.
9. See R. I. Moore (*Formation of a Persecuting Society*) on heresies in general and on persecution and exclusion. See also: on the question of heretics, Alain de Lille, *De fide catholica contra haereticos*, *Patrologiae Latinae* cols. 210: 307c–430a (Turnholt: Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1855, 1976), on the Welsh and the Trojans, Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London and New York: Penguin, 1978), pp. 264–265; on sodomy, Muhammad, and the Arab world, Jacques de Vitry in James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 399; and on sodomy and the Jew, Steven Kruger, “Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories,” in K. Lochrie, P. McCracken, and J. Schultz, eds., *Constructing*, pp. 158–179; *idem*, “The Spectral Jew,” *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998), pp. 9–35.
10. There are modern parallels to these same categories, typified by: (a) the association of sodomy with political movements such as the hippie or anti-war movements of the late 1960s; (b) the charge that political enemies condone homosexuality and are thereby guilty of moral decline; (c) the persistent charges that Jews, gays, and Communists are virtually interchangeable terms; the replacement of Soviet communists by gays and lesbians in political commentary from the religious right in the US

after 1990; (d) Tanya Luhrmann's claim that the Parsi community in India expresses its own pessimism and dissatisfaction with its status within the larger community in a sort of "urban legend" that most of its young men are gay; (e) the destruction of the Sodom and Gomorrah topos which arises frequently in conjunction with the AIDS epidemic; (f) the ubiquitous derogatory epithet "faggot" directed at even very young boys whose behavior challenges gender parameters; (g) the US Marine Corps' public relations campaign: "We're looking for a few good men!"; "hazing" and the recruitment for college fraternities, men's clubs etc.; (h) charges that children of working mothers, feminists, gay families, and one-parent households are likely to be gay as an effect of deprivation of appropriate parental models; (i) attacks on government arts agencies as effete, gay-controlled mafia which represent only a small minority and are intent on destruction of the family, a secular humanist and "homosexual agenda."

11. Tatlock, *Legendary History*; Boswell, *Christianity*; and Thomas Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship* (New York and London: Garland, 1984).
12. On the Greeks, see David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), as well as Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), and Bernard Sergent, *L'homosexualité initiatique dans l'Europe ancienne* (Paris: Payot, 1986). On the Romans, see David Greenberg, *Construction*, pp. 152–160; and on the Celts, see Erick Pontalley, "La Pédérastie celtique dans la Gaule pré-romaine," trans. Leo G. Adamson, *Paidika: The Journal of Paedophilia* 2, 2 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 32–39.
13. Cited in Michael Goodich, ed., *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 135.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
15. John Benton, ed., *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 87.
16. Stehling's anthology, *Medieval Latin Poems*, provides abundant examples from a wide range of texts.
17. Examples abound in Boswell, *Christianity*; Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*; and V. A. Kolve, "Ganymede, *Son of Getron*: Medieval Monasticism and the Drama of Same-Sex Drive," *Speculum* 73, 4 (October 1998), pp. 1014–1066.
18. Salverda de Grave, *Eneas: Roman du XII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1985), 9133–9136.
19. John of Salisbury, *The Frivolity of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. J. B. Pike (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), p. 206.
20. Dante Alighieri, *Purgatory, The Portable Dante*, trans. M. Musa (New York and London: Penguin, 1995), Canto 26, ll. 76–78.
21. Aristotle's comments are found in the *Politics* II, 9, 1269b23, trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 60, where he says that men from soldiering and warlike nations are easily overcome by women "excepting the Celts and any others who have manifestly honored sexual intercourse among males." A bit later in the same work he claims that sexual relations among men were "instituted" in Sparta so as to prevent women from having

- too many children (1272a12, p. 67). Elsewhere in the *Politics*, Aristotle denounces incest between fathers, sons, and brothers, and homosexual rape (1311b6, p. 234). A ruler, says Aristotle, “should engage in sexual relations with youths for reasons of love, not because he has the power to” (1315a14, p. 242). Such relationships are dangerous because they can cause jealousy and the formation of factions within the community, though the same could be said for any relationship, including those with women (1303b17, p. 214). Ptolemy (*Tetrabiblos* II, 3, 61–62, in Claudio Tolomeo, *Le Previsioni astrologiche* [Verona: Mondadori, 1985], p. 111) also reported that among peoples of the north, men were more inclined to same-sex relations. Their geographical placement with relation to Jupiter and Mars would supposedly produce men little inclined to lovemaking with women, and more inclined to take male lovers.
22. C. H. Oldfather, *Diodorus Siculus* [of Sicily], 12 vols., vol. V: 32, 7–33.3, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 185. I have modified Oldfather and Jones’ translations slightly after consulting other published translations. Their original word choices are included in square brackets.
 23. *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. Howard Leonard Jones, 8 vols. vol. IV, 4, 6, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 251.
 24. Cited in Pontalley, “La Pédérastie celtique,” pp. 32–39.
 25. Greenberg, *Construction*, cites the following studies: Lily Weiser-Aall, *Altgermanische Jünglingsweihen und Männerbünde* (Baden (Bühl): Konkordia, 1927); Otto Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (Frankfurt am Main: M. Diesterwey, 1934); Jean Przyluski, “Les confréries de loups-garous dans les sociétés indo-européennes,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 121 (1940), pp. 128–145; Geo Widengren, *Der Feudalismus in alten Iran: Männerbund, Gefolgswesen, Feudalismus in der iranischen Gesellschaft im Hinblick auf die indogermanischen Verhältnisse* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969), p. 52. Jan Bremmer (“An Enigmatic Indo-European Rite: Paederasty,” *Arethusa* 13 [1980], pp. 279–298) notes that the Irish had similar practices, though there is no evidence that they included a sexual element (Greenberg, *Construction*, pp. 243, 111).
 26. Greenberg, *Construction*, 246.
 27. *Ibid.*, 246 n.24.
 28. Sergent, *L’homosexualité initiatique*, pp. 177–191.
 29. Sergent says that the priesthood in Persian and Indian societies tried for centuries to eradicate pederastic rituals from their initiation ceremonies whereas these rituals went largely unchallenged in cultures where the warriors dominated (*L’homosexualité, initiatique*, pp. 222–231).
 30. Gerald W. Creed, “Sexual Subordination,” in Goldberg, ed., *Reclaiming*, pp. 66–94.
 31. Susan Faludi wrote a fascinating exposé of just this type of ritualized, all-male environment, as it still operates at the military academy, the Citadel. The intimate bonds encouraged between cadets are described by officials as “like a true marriage,” replete, as one would imagine, with homosocial/homoerotic currents. See the September 5, 1994, issue of *New Yorker* magazine for a full account (pp. 62–81).

32. See Creed, “Sexual Subordination.”
33. See Jan Bremmer, ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London: Croom Helm, 1987; repr. London and New York: Routledge, 1988) and Fritz Graf, “Orpheus: A Poet Among Men,” in the same volume, pp. 80–106.
34. Greenberg (*Construction*, p. 107) cites Dover (*Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 189–190) on this matter and he, in turn, is citing Ephoros, a fourth-century BCE historian, and Strabo (*The Geography of Strabo*, trans. Jones, p. 155).
35. “illi qui ante pubertatem supponuntur, dicens quod si huiusmodi turpis luxuria accidat tempore quo mollis et tenera est natura ipsorum qui supponuntur ut quando non possunt sperma emittere omnia predictorum istis cito adveniunt” (*Problemata*, fol. [75]ra), cited in Joan Cadden, “Sciences/Silences: The Natures and Languages of ‘Sodomy’ in Peter of Abano’s *Problemata* Commentary,” in Lochrie, McCracken, and Schultz, eds., *Constructing*, p. 56 n.44.
36. Cadden, “Sciences/Silences,” p. 48.
37. Joan Cadden, “‘Nothing Natural is Shameful’: Vestiges of a Debate about Sex and Science in a Group of Late-Medieval Manuscripts,” *Speculum* 76, 1 (January 2001), p. 68.
38. Georges Duby notes that after 1100 the Church begins actively to combat both (1) the doctrine of Nicolaism, a justification for priestly marriage that claimed as its defense that marriage helped the priest avoid fornication; and (2) exaggerated asceticism, which led to the radical rejection of marriage characteristic of the Cathar heresy (Georges Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. J. Dunnett [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], pp. 15–16. Originally published as *Mâle moyen âge* [Paris: Flammarion, 1988]). Jo Ann McNamara’s discussion of such issues, what she calls the *Herrenfrage*, is essential reading (“The *Herrenfrage*”) as is Robert Swanson’s “Angels Incarnate.”
39. In the early twelfth century, ceremonies of initiation were usually conducted by a lord in whose court the young man had served and been trained. Even women could induct knights in the absence of the lord. During the eleventh century an ecclesiastical element was introduced into the ceremony in the form of blessings of accoutrements, but the use of a complete written Church ritual remained rare before the thirteenth century. Marjorie Chibnall, ed., *The World of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 142–143.
40. So named because Pope Gregory VII was the most vociferous in asserting the supreme authority of the Papacy over secular authorities in all matters pertaining to the governance of spiritual and civic matters. Clerical marriages were declared invalid by the first Lateran Council of 1123. See Conrad Leyser, “Cities of the Plain,” pp. 191–211.
41. Leyser, in fact, argues that the *Liber Gomorrhianus* should more rightly be seen as an attack on simony and on the disintegration of monastic traditions, an attack which uses sodomites as a lightning-rod figure atop a much larger pile of abuses. Sodomites were apparently a safer target to attack than those influential Church figures guilty of simony and avarice; but in attacking anonymous sodomites, Peter could then address a host of other corruptions. Conjoining the biblical account

- of the destruction of Sodom with Peter Damian's own opening salvo in his attack on the sodomites, Leyser says that: "The field now lay clear for the founding of sodomy, a discursive institution of beguiling moral clarity" ("Cities of the Plain," p. 211).
42. Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 373. Michael Goodich (*Other Middle Ages*) situates the real turn from passive condemnation of sodomy to active prosecution in regional activities such as this one, inspired by the Gregorian reforms. The impetus came from priests and monastic institutions but it was soon taken up by the reforming laity.
43. Anselm was seeking King William Rufus's support in condemning sodomy as well as simony, long hair on men, the hereditary succession to benefices, and incestuous marriages (Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 373). When William declined to help, Anselm called the Council of London in 1102, which took up the practice of tonsure, permissible types of shoes, and the celibacy of the clergy. Claire Fennell, "The Degenerate Morals and Fashions of Anglo-Norman Clerical and Lay Society at the Turn of the Eleventh Century: Interpreting the Sources," unpublished paper, 1998.
44. Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 329.
45. As an example of the widespread reputation of the monasteries as dens of vice, see Gerald of Wales' anecdote about Richard Lionheart. The King is accused by outsiders of having three daughters that he cannot marry off: *Superbia*, *Luxuria*, and *Cupiditas*. The King answers on the spot that those daughters have already been given in marriage: Covetousness (*Cupiditas*) to the White Monks or Cistercians, Pride (*Superbia*) to the Templars, and Lechery (*Luxuria*) to the Black Monks/Benedictines (*Journey through Wales*, p. 105). The anecdote itself is interesting in its choice of Richard as father since it was rather common knowledge that Richard spent almost no time with his wife and left no heirs other than a reputed bastard child. See further discussion at the end of chapter 2.
46. "Considerandum etiam est quia hactenus ita fuit publicum hoc peccatum, ut vix aliquis pro eo erubesceret; et ideo multi magnitudinem ejus nescientes, in illud se praecipitabant" (*Patrologia Latina* 159: col. 95, cited in Derrick S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* [London: Longmans, Green, 1955; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1975], pp. 124–125, and in Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 215 n.26). John Boswell (p. 216), however, asserts that this London edict was probably never published since John of Salisbury, writing fifty years later, seems to have had no knowledge of its recommendations.
47. Most of the legislation dealing with sodomy was directed against the clergy rather than the civilian population. Boswell (*Christianity*, pp. 160, 188) points out that both Saint Benedict and Saint Basil recognized the danger of homosexual attraction within monastic communities. The Third Lateran Council (1179) adopted a canon specifically prohibiting "that incontinence which is against nature" and decreed that clerics guilty of unnatural vice must either forfeit clerical status or be confined indefinitely to a monastery. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 399; Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, p. 44.

48. Brian McGuire (*Friendship*, p. 211), for example, argues that “Anselm had one great love in his life, the young monk Osbern at Bec in Normandy. . . . The exact nature of Anselm’s bond with Osbern cannot be determined but it seems possible and even likely that . . . [he] did become strongly emotionally attached to this attractive and spirited young man” (p. 212). See also Boswell, *Christianity*; Julian P. Haseldine, “Love, Separation and Male Friendship: Words and Actions in Saint Anselm’s Letters to his Friends,” in Hadley, ed., *Masculinity*, pp. 238–255; and R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
49. Gaunt offers this brief summation of the differences between traditional feudal models of marriage and the Church’s new model: “the three elements of the ‘feudal’ model of marriage were: endogamy . . . , repudiation at will on the part of men, and family control of the choice of marriage partner. The key features of the Church’s model were: strict exogamy . . . indissolubility, and the need for the consent of both partners for the marriage to be valid” (*Gender and Genre*, p. 74).
50. Gratian’s *Decretum* (1140) stressed that consummation was a prerequisite to marriage and this view was formalized in the Alexandrian synthesis of 1163. In this document, Pope Alexander III declared that a vow pronounced in the present or future tense, followed by consummation, constitutes a marriage. For more on the implications of consensualism, see R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 161–164. As McNamara notes (“The *Herrenfrage*,” p. 5), by the 1170s the Papacy was already stressing the centrality and necessity of the sacraments, marriage among them, to the ordered life of the Christian and eventual salvation.
51. See Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*; John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*; Constance Bouchard, “*Strong of Body, Brave and Noble*”: *Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 86–98; and Duby, *Love and Marriage*, esp. pp. 3–21, on marriage practices.
52. Simon Gaunt argues (in “Marginal Men, Marcabru and Orthodoxy: The Early Troubadours and Adultery,” *Medium Aevum* 59 [1990], pp. 55–72) that the troubadour phenomenon of *fin’amor* should be read in light of these attempts on the part of the Church to gain control of aristocratic marriage practices (see also Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 74). By extension, the effects of this incursion are implicit in the literary texts that imitate and adapt *fin’amor* codes to the northern French and Plantagenet courts. See chapters 3 and 5.
53. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, pp. 17–19. Several incidents in Gerbert de Montreuil’s *Continuation*, dated to about 1220, show that this new thinking on marriage had already evolved from the previous century. Several female characters refuse marriages that are being imposed upon them by withholding consent; and one woman, using legalistic reasoning, claims that she is already married in spirit to a man who seduced her with promises of marriage after sex only to reject her for another: “Li fols, plains de desloiauté, / Me fiancha lués de sa main / Qu’il m’esposeroit en loialté” (ll. 1779–1781). She succeeds in convincing all who hear her, including

- Perceval. The lying knight is subsequently forced to honor his word after Perceval disrupts the marriage ceremony to the lady of his choice with a public declaration of his perfidy. The issue of family or feudal control is never raised in the text. The spurned lady self-righteously claims her right to marry based solely on a vow and the touching of the hands. See Gerbert de Montreuil, *La continuation de Perceval*, Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 3 vols., ed. Mary Williams (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1922 [vol. 1 (28)], 1925 [vol. 2 (50)]) and Marguerite Oswald, ed., vol. 3 (101) (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1975).
54. See Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 75, and Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), for whom romance as a genre is essentially made possible through this shift of allegiances and the space that is thus created for the expression of male and female desire. Both note, however, that while the historical changes were gradual rather than instantaneous, it would appear that the effects on literature, and perhaps on the real expressions of sexual desire that it inspired, were more sudden and dramatic. See also Bloch, *Etymologies*.
55. This development parallels the revival of Roman law in the late eleventh century, largely at the University of Bologna. Both secular and canon law benefited as a result in the twelfth century, Law faculties proliferated, new civil law codes were adopted and Gratian's *Decretum* became the standard of canon law and curricula. Naturally, these developments were opposed by those unwilling to abandon tradition, custom, and feudal law.
56. Official recognition of marriage as a sacrament appeared only at the Council of Florence (1438–45). There it was recorded that the seventh sacrament is matrimony, a sign of the unity of Christ and his Church. This teaching was confirmed at the Council of Trent in 1563 (J. M. Egan, "Matrimony II (Sacrament of)," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* [Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1967], p. 468). Much earlier, however, marriage was claimed as a sacrament; already in the eleventh century the Church had made provision for an official marriage rite in which the priest played a central role (Martin R. Dudley, "Sacramental Liturgies in the Middle Ages," in Thomas Heffernan and E. Ann Matter, eds., *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* [Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001], p. 234). Peter Lombard expressed faith in the sacramental possibilities of marriage already in 1150 (Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages* [London and New York: Routledge, 1991], pp. 24–25) but it was only over the course of the following two centuries that widespread Church-sanctioned marriage ceremonies took hold.
57. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 11.
58. See McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," and Greenberg, *Construction*, p. 282.
59. McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*," p. 23.
60. Though clerical celibacy had been official Church policy since at least the fifth century, it was not enforced and most clergy continued to marry or maintain concubines. As priests passed their positions and churches on to their sons and many of the faithful turned to heretical movements, the Church reasserted its

control over its offices, property, and personnel and took the offensive in wresting from civil authorities some of the duties over which they had exercised control. See the essays collected in Michael Frassetto, ed., *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform* (New York and London: Garland, 1998), especially Megan McLaughlin's contribution, for more on this topic, and McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*."

61. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 18.
62. James Brundage (*Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 474) notes that in Norway and Sweden large numbers of priests were themselves the illegitimate sons of priests. This practice of handing down a position and its wealth within families was one of the factors that had motivated the Church's crackdown in the eleventh century. Brundage cites Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, "*Ex fornicatione nati*: Studies on the Position of Priests' Sons from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 2 (1980), pp. 40–41.
63. Though, as Larry Scanlon notes ("Unmanned Men and Eunuchs of God: Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus* and the Sexual Politics of Papal Reform," *New Medieval Literatures* 2 [1998], p. 54): "Celibacy, though it is the refusal of all carnal desire, nevertheless assumes and builds upon such desire. That is to say, the physical discipline of the celibate depends on the prior discipline inherent in the 'natural' *officium* of sexuality, a masculine restriction of phallic desire to that which masculinity lacks, that is, femininity, according to a hierarchical scheme of sexual difference. For this reason, clerical celibacy was as much an extension of heterosexual desire as a repression of it." McNamara sees the issue of clerical celibacy as one of the prime causes of the crisis of masculine identity that she locates in the twelfth century ("The *Herrenfrage*"). She sees the increasingly virulent homophobic and misogynistic discourse of the first half of the twelfth century as a manifestation of this crisis.
64. Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, pp. 69–70.
65. Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 217 n.33.
66. Guibert de Nogent makes this accusation explicitly in his discussion of the precepts of a Manichean heresy which flourished near Soissons in northern France. The heretics are said to lie men with men and women with women, and to indulge in orgies as part of their secret rituals. John Benton, ed., *Self and Society*, p. 212.
67. John Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, p. 44. Sodomy can, of course, refer to any non-procreative sex act, performed by any gender. See also Pierre Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials: The Development of a Sexual Code, 550–1150* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 135; Boswell, *Christianity*, chapter 8; Emil Friedberg, ed., *Corpus iuris canonici*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: G. Tauchnitz, 1879) on Gratian's *Decretum* C.32, q.7, C.11 *Adulterii*; and Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum*, 4.38.2 in *Libri IV Sententiarum*, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum (Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1971–81).
68. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 399 and n.391; Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, p. 44.

69. In the case of the Council of Paris, the statute forbade nuns from sharing a bed and stipulated that a lamp should burn all night, an adaptation of the original Benedictine rule that had governed monasteries since the fifth century. Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period* (Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-Clio, Inc., 1979) p. 46, and Greenberg, *Construction*, p. 286.
70. Baldwin (*Language of Sex*, p. 1) notes that there are over one hundred manuscripts extant.
71. Peter confirms the association of Sodom and Gomorrah with same-sex erotic pleasure and claims that the sin is so distasteful to God that he himself had to come to punish it. His account brims with imagery of barrenness, non-fertility, and death. See Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, pp. 44 and 247–250; and Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 277–278 and 375–378 for a translation of the portion “De vitio sodomitico.”
72. Michel Foucault accords this date great importance in the development of what he calls the ritualistic production of truth through confession (*l’aveu*) (Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 78). In Karma Lochrie’s account of his thinking, it produced “a new Christian technology of the self and a discourse tailored to the requirements of power of the medieval church” (“Desiring Foucault,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, 1 [Winter 1997], p. 6). Lochrie also notes, however, in *Covert Secrets*, that many of the characteristics of this “new technology,” including private confession, were operating well before the marker date of 1215.
73. Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254, Based on the Papal Letters and the Conciliar Decrees of the Period* (New York: Hermon Press, 1966 [1933]), p. 308, cited in Steven Kruger, “Becoming Christian, Becoming Male?” in J. J. Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 21–41.
74. In a 1250 law, Bologna allowed people banished because of a sodomy conviction to return to the city if they paid a fine. By 1259 they were banished permanently. A year later, sodomy was declared a capital offence. Frederick II’s 1231 *Constitutions of Melfi*, on the other hand, do not mention sodomy at all; nor do contemporary German law codes. See Greenberg, *Construction*, pp. 272–273; E. N. Van Kleffens, *Hispanic Law until the End of the Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), pp. 155–156, 207–213; Ferdinand Schevill, *History of Florence* (New York: Frederick Unger, 1961), p. 112; and Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 286–287.
75. Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, p. 44.
76. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 97.
77. See Greenberg *Construction*, p. 274, and his sources: Bailey, *Homosexuality*, pp. 142–143; Vern L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1976), pp. 391, 410 n.65; Goodich, *Unmentionable*, p. 78; Claude Courouve, “Sodomy Trials in France,” *Gay Books Bulletin* 1 (1979), pp. 22–26.
78. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, pp. 472–473.
79. Kolve’s rich and suggestive study of just one liturgical play, *Filius Getronis (Son of Getron)* (“Ganymede,” p. 1061) manages to evoke the multiple ways in which

such issues could be dramatized within a monastic community and how such issues could, at least dramatically, be resolved.

80. On Jonathan and David, see 1 Samuel 18.1–3; 20.30, 41–43; 2 Samuel 1.26 (*Jerusalem Bible*). On John and Christ, see John's repeated reference to himself as "the disciple Jesus loves" in his gospels: 13.23, 19.26, 20.2, 21.7, 20 ("The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said, "Ask who it is he means," so leaning back on Jesus' breast he said . . ." [13.23]). See the discussions of David and Jonathan in Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 238–239, 252; Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, pp. 75–87; and Kolve "Ganymede," p. 1052. On John the Evangelist, see Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 115 n.76, 225–226 and Plate 13; Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*, pp. 122 n.59, 138–139; Kolve, "Ganymede," p. 1052 n.95.
81. "Deleo super te, frater mi Ionatha, decore nimis et amabilis super amorem mulierum. Sicut mater unicum amat filium suum, ita ego te diligebam" (I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women. As a mother loves her only son, so did I love you). According to McGuire, Aelred of Rievaulx looked to the friendship of David and Jonathan as a model of the "mirror for true friendship" throughout his life (*Friendship*, p. 321; see also p. 237).
82. As Boswell notes, the emphasis on friendship as the deepest of human attachments is entirely characteristic of the classical world: "'Just friends' would have been a paradox to Aristotle or Cicero: no relationship was more emotional, more intimate, more intense than friendship. . . . [it] was passionate and indissoluble, and much literature idealises intense, lifelong friendships involving great sacrifice on the part of one or both friends – motifs the modern world tends to associate almost exclusively with romantic love" (*Same Sex Unions*, p. 76). See also David Konstan (*Friendship in the Classical World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]) for a fuller treatment of the classical antecedents of these models and Haseldine, "Love, Separation," for the rhetorical formulation of friendship in letter writing.

As an example, here is Bernard's letter of grief over the death of his brother, Gerard:

Ego, ego illa portio misera in luto iacens, truncata parte sui, et parte potiori, et dicitur mihi: 'Ne fleveris?' Avulsa sunt viscera mea a me, et dicitur mihi: 'Ne senseris?' Sentio, sentio vel invitatus, quia nec fortitudo lapidum fortitudo mea, nec caro mea aenea est; sentio prorsus et doleo, et dolor meus in conspectu meo semper. (cited in McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 504 n.149)

83. McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 6.
84. McGuire (*Friendship*, p. 6) points out that these Eastern sources imply that even a father and son would be liable to sexual attraction as a result of their isolation; thus, they recommend such a pairing only if the youth has first lost his identity and marred his good looks with acid!
85. McGuire (*Friendship*, p. 18) cites Jerome's translation: "Si deprehensus fuerit aliquis e fratribus libenter cum pueris sedere, et ludere, et habere amicitias aetatis infirmæ" (see also *Friendship*, p. 435 n.57).

86. Sister M. Monica Wagner, *Saint Basil, Ascetical Works* (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1950), p. 23.
87. Brian McGuire summarizes nicely in the following passage a key distinction between the Eastern and Western monastic traditions: “Eastern writers made absolute distinctions between ways of life within the Christian brotherhood; Western writers combined the desert and the city in a new monasticism. If the East made the desert a city, the West brought the spirit of the desert to the city . . . the Western fathers made one central point from which their medieval heirs could benefit: they insisted that love of an individual neighbor was not necessarily a dangerous commitment” (*Friendship*, p. 90).
88. “In the entire section V of *Verba Seniorum* (PL, 73), I cannot find a single story that refers to homosexual temptation. There is the abstract *cogitatio fornicationis*, but whenever the temptation is concretized, it deals with a woman” (McGuire, *Friendship*, pp. 41 and 438 n.8).
89. Censorship within commentaries and translations abound. The *Problemata* (attributed to Aristotle) 4:26 discusses why some men enjoy intercourse with other men, but Jacques Despar’s fifteenth-century commentary is frankly evasive when he reaches this topic (Problem 26) and a late Greek commentary on the *Problemata* omits that passage entirely (Cadden, “Sciences/Silences,” p. 43). Brian McGuire notes that the passage from Bernard of Clairvaux’s letter on the grief he felt over his brother’s death (cited in note 82) was excised from the *Exordium magnum cisterciense*, an official reckoning of the Clairvaux Cistercians’ history since their founding: “Even in its rich use of legends about Bernard, it sheds little light on his friendships. It is probably by no means accidental that the *Exordium* leaves out some of the most passionate passages in Bernard’s description of his love for his brother, Gerard” (*Friendship*, p. 184). In similar fashion, John Boswell notes (*Same-Sex Unions*, p. 264 n.12) that MS *Ba* of Gerald of Wales’ *Topography of Ireland* was defaced at a point in the text where same-sex unions were being discussed. The rubric *De argumento nequitiae et novo desponsationis genere* (An argument for their wickedness and a new kind of marriage) and a drawing were cut out of the page.
90. The plan of St. Gall shows that in early Benedictine houses children were confined to a special cloister, separate from both the monks’ quarters and the “outer school” where noble boys were educated for careers in the outside world. As Kolve says: “Monastic architecture was designed very specifically to prevent desire for the love of anyone but God” (“Ganymede,” p. 1038).
91. A. C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro, eds., *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (New York: Image Books, 1975); Kolve, “Ganymede,” p. 1040; Greenberg, *Construction*, p. 284.
92. See Dom Thomas Symons, trans., *Regularis concordia Anglicae nationis monachorum sanctimonialiumque / The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1953), pp. 7–8. The passage is cited in Kolve, “Ganymede,” p. 1028. Kolve also provides an excellent discussion of the wider implications of this passage.

93. Other Carolingian authors who express similar strongly worded devotion to their male correspondents or the dedicatees of their poems include Rhabanus Maurus (776–856) and his student, Walafrid Strabo (809–849). See Helen Waddell, *Medieval Latin Lyrics*, 5th ed. (London: Constable, 1951); Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*; James Wilhelm, *Gay and Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology from Sappho to Michelangelo* (New York: Garland, 1995); and Boswell, *Christianity*.
94. Cited in McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 122, from E. L. Dümmler, ed., *Epistolae Karolini Aevi* (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1895), Epistle 157, p. 255.
95. Cited in McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 118, from Dümmler, *Epistolae*, Epistle 10, p. 36.
96. Cited in McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 123.
97. See Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*, pp. 38–53, for samples of Baudri's love verse, and Gerald Bond, *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). See also the illuminating remarks on the homoerotic poetry of Leoninus in Bruce Holsinger and David Townsend, "Ovidian Homoerotics in Twelfth-Century Paris," *GLQ* 8, 3 (2002), pp. 389–423.
98. Boswell, *Christianity*.
99. The profundity of the love that Galahad feels for Lancelot in the Vulgate cycle would alone be enough to disprove that statement. See E. Jane Burns, "Introduction," in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, 5 vols. (New York and London: Garland, 1993–96), vol. I, pp. xv–xxxii; Christiane Marchello-Nizia, "Amour courtois, société masculine et figures du pouvoir," *Annales* 36, 2 (1981), pp. 969–982; and Gaunt's chapter on "Monologic Masculinity," in *Gender and Genre*.
100. See Haseldine, "Love, Separation," pp. 238–255.
101. Aelred of Rievaulx's conception of friendship was hardly the norm, at least if we go by the surviving copies of his manuscripts. Although he composed his *Spiritual Friendship* at the request of Bernard of Clairvaux, the library of the Cistercian mother house in Clairvaux held only one copy, acquired in the thirteenth century. Aelred's works circulated for the most part in England with a few copies having made it to the Low Countries.
102. McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 505 n.155; Bernard Lucet, *Les codifications cisterciennes de 1237 et de 1257* (Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1977), pp. 317–318; and Lucet, *La codification cistercienne de 1202 et son évolution ultérieure* (Rome: Biblioteca Cisterciensis, 1964), p. 122.
103. See above, n.69. More can be found Bullough, *Sexual Variance*, pp. 384 and 408 n.28. He is citing from the *Concilium Parisiense*, par. III, ii, col. 849.
104. McGuire, *Friendship*, pp. 387–388.
105. *Summa theologiae*, Q. 92, obj. 1; cited in Paul E. Sigmund, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1988), p. 38.
106. Cadden, *Sex Difference*, p. 174.
107. *Ibid.*, pp. 177–178.
108. Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, p. 230.

109. Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, pp. 230–232, and Cadden, *Sex Difference* chapter 1, provide excellent summaries and interpretations of this material.
110. Peter Cantor also recognizes the physiological status of the hermaphrodite but notes that the Church grants such individuals the option of choosing definitively only one sex and gender. Once chosen, largely following physiological characteristics, the individual is limited to acting out the role assigned to that sex/gender. No switching is allowed (Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, p. 45).
111. Cadden, *Sex Difference*, p. 202.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
113. Cadden, “Sciences/Silences,” p. 41.
114. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 100.
115. Cadden, “Sciences/Silences,” pp. 46 and 52.
116. Cadden (“Sciences/Silences,” p. 49) attributes to the “persistent instability” of the text the possibility of such a reading. She isolates three rhetorical techniques that characterize his work: “normalizing the subject by citing accepted authorities and using conventional scholastic methods,” persistent application of naturalistic explanations at the anatomical, physiological, and psychological levels,” and “evasive and unstable usage of language, especially of names for the types of men he is discussing” (p. 43). Cadden also notes strategic reasons for this “instability”: “There were many reasons not to speak, and Peter’s run-ins with the inquisition, apparently in connection with his tendency to overstate the powers of nature, hint at the presence of political dangers, in addition to the disciplinary divisions and standards of decorum” (p. 51).
117. This notion of an itch is actually closer to the way that many of the scholastics theorized sexual desire. Jean Gerson, for example, advocated warning boys very early of the dangers of sexual desire: “Because of the ‘corruption of nature,’ boys of three or four are already inclined toward masturbation because of a certain unfamiliar itch that accompanies erections” (Dyan Elliott, “Pollution, Illusion, and Masculine Disarray,” in Lochrie, McCracken, and Schultz, eds., *Constructing*, p. 9. Elliot is citing Gerson, *De confessione mollitei*, 8: 72–73, found in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 8, ed. Mgr. Glorieux [Paris: Desclée & Cie., 1960]).
118. On the rich associations of the hyena with sodomy, see Boswell, *Christianity*, 138–143.
119. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 151.
120. Cadden (“Sciences/Silences,” p. 52) concludes that on the basis of Peter of Abano’s commentary one may conclude that “the medieval and the modern overlap with respect to significant areas of homoeroticism – however different the cultural readings of these acts and desires might be.”
121. Cadden, *Sex Difference*, p. 221; Greenberg, *Construction*, pp. 278–279.
122. Juvenal, in his *Satire 2* (ll. 15–21), offers two portraits of “feminized males,” implying that in the first case the man’s disposition is a physiological inevitability: “Peribomius, therefore, provides a more honest and genuine case. That I put down to the workings of fate. His walk and expression proclaim his disorder. Such folk, by their candor, call for pity: their very obsession secures indulgence.

- Far worse are those who condemn perversion in Hercules' style, and having held forth about manly virtue, wriggle their rumps." See Juvenal, *The Satires*, trans. N. Ruud, intro. and notes W. Barr (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
123. Peter of Abano is today best known for his esoteric speculations on astrology.
 124. In terms of the four humors that dominated medieval medical thought and treatment, males were thought to be hot and dry, prone to higher degrees of yellow and black bile, the humors of fire and earth, and choleric and melancholic natures; while females were cold and moist, dominated by blood and phlegm, associated with water and earth, sanguine and phlegmatic personalities.
 125. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* II, 3, 61–62; cited in Tolomeo, *Le Previsioni astrologiche*, p. III.

2 IMAGINING SODOMY

1. Toril Moi, "Desire in Language: Andreas Capellanus and the Controversy of Courtly Love," in David Aers, ed., *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, History* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), p. 20. A portion of the section of this chapter on Peter Damian will also be appearing in a volume of essays entitled *Troubled Vision*, ed. Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (New York and London: St. Martin's Press, 2004).
2. Michael Nerlich, *The Ideology of Adventure: Studies in Modern Consciousness, 1100–1750*, trans. R. Crowley, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Cited in Crane, *Gender and Romance*, p. 167.
3. On the association of sodomy with Muslims and heresy in general, see Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 278–286; Goodich, *Unmentionable and Other Middle Ages*; Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society*; David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Brundage, *Law Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 399; and Gautier de Tornay's *L'Histoire de Gilles de Chyn*, ed. Edwin B. Place (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1941), ll. 3555–3556. On the association with learning and new urban spaces again see Boswell, *Christianity*, chapters 7–10. For political critiques, see the discussion of John of Salisbury and Walter Map below. See Greenberg, *Construction*, p. 297 n.285, for more on the economic and class tensions that found expression in contumely against Jews, heretics, and sodomites, and Goodich, *Unmentionable*, chapters 1–3.
4. Maurice Lever, *Les bûchers de Sodome: histoire des "infâmes"* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), p. 41.
5. "ubi regnat luxuria, ibi miserabiliter ancillatur et affligitur animus. O Parisius, quam idonea es ad capiendas et decipiendas animas!" (J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina* [Turnholt: Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1855, 1976], 202: col. 519, cited in McGuire, *Friendship*, p. 486 n.190. Henceforth the *Patrologia Latina* will be abbreviated as *PL*.)
6. These short texts are found in Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*, pp. 94–95. They were found written on folio 81 in a twelfth- or thirteenth-century hand in a

ninth-century manuscript, now in Leiden (Vossianus lat. in oct. 88), interspersed amongst letters, grammatical and philosophical works:

91		
Carnotum, Senonis,	pereant ubi prostat Adonis	
lege lupararis:	sunt ibi stupra maris.	
His infecta malis	urbs nobilis, urbs specialis	
Parisius tenerao	nubere gaudet ero.	
Tu magis insanis	his omnibus, Aurelianis,	
Que titulum sceleris	huius habendo peris.	

92		
Sordent nunc husque	Carnotum Parisiusque	
In Sodome vitio,	Senonis quoque fit Paris Io.	

93		
Aurelianenses	sunt primi, si bene penses	
Illorum mores,	puerorum concubitores.	

7. Cormier and Kuster, “Old Views,” p. 605.
8. Bruce Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 175.
9. Tatlock, *Legendary History*, p. 353. To refer to any of these monastic or ecclesiastical figures by nationality is problematic, to say the least. Anselm was born in Lombardy, educated at Bec, in Normandy, and finally became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, a position he held until his death in 1109.
10. “Filiū nobilium, dum sunt iuniores, / mittuntur in Franciam fieri doctores, / quos prece vel precio domant corruptores; / sic pretextatos referunt Artaxata mores” (*Moralisch-satirische Gedichte Walters von Châtillon*, ed. Karl Strecker [Heidelberg: Winter, 1929], pp. 69–70; cited in Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 236 n.98; Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*, pp. 80–81).
11. Cited from the unpublished paper, “The ‘Degenerate Morals and Fashions’ of Anglo-Norman Clerical and Lay Society at the Turn of the Eleventh Century: Interpreting the Sources,” delivered at the “Queer Middle Ages” conference at New York University, November 7, 1998.
12. Jo Ann McNamara (“The *Herrenfrage*,” p. 8) contends that “clerical misogyny reached a crescendo between the mid-eleventh and the mid-twelfth centuries”; not surprisingly, the very period during which sodomy came to play a major role in disciplinary discourse.
13. William Stubbs and Helen J. Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta Regis Ricardi* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 369–370.
14. Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 104.
15. “Inter haec impune procedebat petulans illecebra molles flammisque cremandos turpiter fedebat uenus sodomestica maritalem thorum publice polluebant adulteria. . . . Tunc effeminati passim in orbe dominabantur indisciplinate debachabantur sodomiticisque spurciis foedi catamitae flammis urendi turpiter

- abutebantur . . . hortamenta sacerdotum deridebant; barbaricumque morem in habitu et uita tenebant” (Marjorie Chibnall, ed. and trans., *The Ecclesiastical History of Ordericus Vitalis*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–80), IV, pp. 186, 188; cited in Fennell, “Degenerate.”
16. “Femineam mollitiem petulans iuuentus amplectitur; feminisque uiri curiales in omni lasciuiâ sumnopere adulantur. Pedum articulis ubi finis est corporis colubrinarum similitudinem caudarum imponunt . . . Humum quoque puluerulentam inerularum et palliorum superfluo sirmate uerrunt: longis latisque maicis ad omnia facienda manus operiunt, et his superfluitatibus onusti celeriter ambulare uel aliquid utiliter operari uix possunt . . . Vix aliquis militarium procedit in publicum capite discooperto; legitimeque secundum apostoli preceptum tonso” (Chibnall, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, pp. 188, 190; cited in Fennell, “Degenerate,” p. 1998).
 17. Barlow’s summary is useful: “Nobles grew little beards, wore their hair long at the back like whores, and with a centre parting bared their foreheads like thieves. Their abundant locks were carefully tended, sometimes curled with tongs and either caught back in a headband or covered with a cap. Hardly a knight now went uncovered indoors. These fashions were set by effeminate; and catamites practised sodomy. They spent the night in revelry and dicing, and slept all day. Their fashions proclaimed that like stinking goats they delighted in the filth of lust” (*William Rufus*, p. 104).
 18. “Postremo, quicquid Deo Deumque diligentibus displicebat, hoc regi regemque diligentibus placebat. Nec luxuria scelus tacendum exercebant occulte, sed ex impudentia coram sole” (Arnold, 233). Translation from Fennell, “Degenerate,” except for inclusion of the untranslatable “luxuria” in place of “unmentionable sexual crime.”
 19. Eadmer wrote a biography of Anselm after his death.
 20. Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 103.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 409.
 22. The actual words used are “*nebulones* [‘good-for-nothing,’ glossed as *lecatores*] *ac vulgaria scorta*” (whores, prostitutes). As Barlow notes (*William Rufus*, p. 429 n.81) none of the words is specific only to Orderic’s account.
 23. Wace, *Le Roman de rou de Wace*, ed. A. J. Holden, 3 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1970–73), II, l. 9873.
 24. William M. Aird offers another very plausible explanation for the fact that William was unmarried: “It is significant that none of William’s [the Conqueror] sons married early and perhaps his main strategy in seeking to maintain his own power was to prolong the youth of his sons and, in so doing, deny them the status of manhood” (“Frustrated Masculinity: The Relationship between William the Conqueror and his Eldest Son,” in Hadley, ed., *Masculinity*, p. 55). As intriguing as I find this analysis, it should not be read as somehow invalidating the equally plausible and not inconsistent conclusion that William Rufus had little desire for women, other than, perhaps, as a means of asserting his power. That sort of “either/or” reading is responsible for many of the skewed interpretations of medieval sexuality one finds in mid-twentieth-century historiography.

25. To support that contention, Boswell, *Christianity*, cites the “sensible” comments made by Christopher Brooke in *The Saxon and Norman Kings* (London: Batsford, 1963).
26. Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 230.
27. Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 230.
28. Of course sodomy could also be performed on members of the opposite sex but it is quite clear that the chroniclers are referring almost exclusively to same-sex acts when they level these charges. Peter’s four acts include masturbation, mutual masturbation, intercourse between the thighs, and anal intercourse.
29. Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 436.
30. When the Order of the Knights Templar was suppressed in 1312, sodomy and heresy were among the official charges of which they were found guilty.
31. Owen J. Blum, OFM, *St. Peter Damian: His Teaching on the Spiritual Life* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), p. 52.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 32. For more on the scapegoat and collective identity, see René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Originally published as *Le Bouc émissaire* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1982).
34. On Peter Damian see especially Boyd “Disrupting the Norm: Sodomy, Culture and the Male Body in Peter Damian’s *Liber Gomorrhianus*,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 11 (1994), pp. 63–73; Boswell *Christianity*, pp. 210–213 and 365–366; Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*; Scanlon, “Unmanned Men”; and Leyser “Cities of the Plain.”
35. Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, pp. 6–7.
36. Pope Leo’s letter precedes the *Liber Gomorrhianus* in many, but not all, of the extant manuscripts (Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, p. 3 n.3).
37. Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, p. 5.
38. Peter was a prolific writer and preacher. His first work was the *Vita Romualdi*, dated to 1042, followed over the next twenty years by several volumes of letters, sermons, and some fifty-three treatises on such subjects as flagellation and sodomites, penance, the monastic life, grace, wisdom, and happiness. An inveterate reformer, he has been seen by scholars as either just a very stern saint or an unhappy neurotic who coped through writing and the acting out of personal grief and grievances. See Lester K. Little, “The Personal Development of Peter Damian,” in William C. Jordan, Bruce McNab, and Teofilo F. Ruiz, eds., *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 317–341.
39. “Quoddam autem nefandissimum et ignominiosum valde vitium in nostris partibus inholevit, cui nisi districtae animadversionis manus quantocius obviet, certum est, quod divini furoris gladius in multorum perniciem immaniter crassaturus impendunt” (Kurt Reindel, ed., *Die Briefe der Petrus Damiani*, vol. 1, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, 4 vols. [Munich: MGH, 1983], pp. 287, 1–4; hereafter cited by page and line reference). All translations are

from Otto J. Blum, trans., *The Letters of Peter Damian*, 31–60, vol. 2 in *The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation* Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1990, here p. 6; further citations are given in the text.

40. “Dic ergo, quisquis es qui Christi passionem superbus irrides, qui, cum eo nudari flagellarique despiciens, nuditatem ejus et cuncta supplicia tanquam nugas ac naenias et quaedam somniorum deliramenta subsannas; quid facies cum eum, qui publice nudatus est et in cruce suspensus, videris in majestatis suae decore conspicuum, angelicis agminibus undique constipatum, incomparabilis spendoris immensitate circumdatum, et super omnia visibilia et invisibilia ineffabiliter gloriosum? Quis, inquam, facies, cum eum, cujus nunc ignominiam despicias, aspexeris in igneo tribunalis excelsis solio praesidentem, et omne genus humanum rescto acquitatis examine terribiliter judicantem? . . . Qua fronte, qua praesumptionis audacia illius gloriam participare sperabis, cujus portare contumeliam et ignominiam despexisti?” (Opusc. 43, 4 in *PL* 145, cols. 682–683, cited in Patricia McNulty, trans. and intro, *Peter Damian: Selected Writings on the Spiritual Life* [London: Faber & Faber, 1959], p. 38).
41. “Nunc autem ad te, papa beatissime” (Reindel 329, 6); “Sed iam te ore ad os quisquis es, sodomita, convenio” (298, 8); “Ego, ego te, infelix anima” (311, 20); “Ecce, o bone vir sodomita” (301, 20); “O miserabilis anima” (314, 1).
42. Mark Jordan calls attention to this same technique in his excellent discussion of the text in *Invention of Sodomy*.
43. “Qualiter enim proximum meum sicut meipsum diligo, si vulnus, quo eum non ambigo crudeliter mori, neglegenter fero in eius corde crassari, videns ergo vulnera mentium, curare neglegam sectione verborum” (326, 17–20)?
44. “Hoc nempe flagitium in cetera crimina non immerito deterrimum creditur, quandoquidem illud omnipotens Deus semper uno modo exosum habuisse legatur, et cum reliquis viciis necdum per legale praeceptum frena posuerat, iam hoc districtae ultionis animadversione damnabat” (289, 6–10).
45. Peter also relies on Pauline texts to amplify this message of violent retribution. Twice he cites Romans 1.32: “Those who do such things deserve to die, not only they who do them, but they also who approve those who practice them” (14).
46. Blum’s footnotes to the 1990 translation of Reindel’s 1983 critical edition note several such variations, and many more are outlined in his earlier book, *St. Peter Damian*.
47. Harvey Whitehouse discusses the differences between doctrinal and the imagistic modes of religiosity in *Arguments and Icons: Divergent Modes of Religiosity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
48. There follows the Latin text for this citation and the two following: “quid rogo, dixisset, si loetale hoc vulnus in ipso corpore sanctae ecclesiae foetere conspiceret” (294, 13–14); “Hoc est enim, quod sobrietatem violat, pudicitiam necat, castitatem iugulat, virginitatem spurcissime contagionis mucrone trucidat” (310, 2–3); “Omnia foedat, omnia maculat, omnia polluit et quantum ad se nichil putum, nichil a sordibus alienum, nichil mundum esse permittit” (310, 3–5).
49. “ubi non de corruptis sed de pollutis exorsum est” (307, 4–5).

50. “Haec pestilentissima sodomorum regina suae tyrannidis legibus obsequentem hominibus turpem Deo reddit odibilem. Adversus Deum nefanda bella conserere, nequissimi spiritus imperat militiam baiulare, ab angelorum consortio separat et infelicem animam sub propriae dominationis iugo a sua nobilitate captivat. Virtutum armis suos milites exuit omniumque vitiorum iaculis, ut confodiantur, exponit. In ecclesia humiliat, in foro condemnat, foedat in secreto, dehonestat in publico, conscientiam rodit ut vernis, carnem exurit ut ignis, anhelat, ut voluptatem expleat, at contra timet, ne ad medium veniat, ne in publicum exeat, ne hominibus innotescat” (310, 9–17).
51. “Filia quippe populi mei pessima plaga contrita est, quia anima, quae sanctae ecclesiae fuerat filia, ab hoste humani generis telo inmunditiae est crudeliter sauciata et auqe in aula regis aeterni lacte sacri eloquii tenerre ac molliter educabatur, nunc veneno libidinis pestilenter infecta in sulphureis Gomorrae cineribus *tumefacta ac rigida* iacere conspicitur” (312, 10–14).
52. “Hinc etiam, dilectissimi, considerandum est quanta sit dignitas nostra, quantaque imbis sit proportio cum Maria. Concepit Maria Christum in vulva cannis deferimus et nos in visceribus mentis. Reficiebat Maria Christum, cum teneris labris lac exprimeres uberum; reficimus et nos raviis honorum deliciis operum” (Sermo 45, *PL* 144, col. 747B; cited in Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, p. 150).
53. “Hoc ille hermita suo facto probat, qui cum ultis virtutibus cum quodam suo collega deservisset, haec ili per diabolum iniecta cogitatio est, ut quandocumque libidine titillaretur, sic semen detritu genitalis membri egerere deberet, tanquam flegma de naribus proiceret . . .” (319, 3–7).
54. “Cogita, quam miserum sit, quod per unum membrum, cuius nunc voluptas expletur, totum postmodum corpus simul cum anima atrocissimis flammaram incendiis perpetuo cruciatur” (324, 1–3). This follows from the conclusions Damian draws in his *Liber gratissimus* (Cap. xv; *PL* 145, col. 119 C) and his *Dominus vobiscum* (cap. x; *PL* 145, col. 239 D) that the particular individual is what it is through its participation in the universal, as in the metaphor of the micro and macrocosm (cited in Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, p. 144).
55. “it is more excusable to indulge in lustful acts with an animal than with a man for one should be judged less severely for losing his own soul than for dragging another with him to destruction” (16).
[“Et, ut michi videtur, toerabilius est cum pecude quam cum viro in luxuriae flagitium labi. Quanto videlicet levius iudicatur quemlibet solum perire, quam secum quoque alium ad interitus perniciem trahere”] (296–7, 7–8 and 1).
56. “quod uterque iste licet incestuose naturaliter tamen, quia cum muliere peccavit, ille in clericum turpitudinem operans sacrilegium commisit in filium, incestus crimen incurrit, in masculum naturae iura dissolvit” (296, 4–7).
57. Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, p. 16.
58. There follows the Latin text of these and the following two citations: “Qui enim non per humilitatis iter, sed per arrogantiae et tumoris anfractus ad Deum accedere gestiunt, patet profecto, quia unde ingressionis aditus pateat, non agnoscunt, vel quia ostium Christus est, sicut ipse dicit: *Ego sum ostium*” (293,

- 14–17); “Sodomitae ergo ad angelos conantur violenter irrupere, cum immundi homines ad Deum temptant per sacri ordinis officia propinquare” (293, 10–11); “Qui enim indignus ordine ad sacri altaris officium conatur irrupere, quid aliud quam relicto ianuae limine per immeabilem parietis obicem nititur introire” (293, 27–29).
59. “Post hec aliis sex mensibus sub senioris spiritalis custodia segregata in curticula degens operi manuum et orationi sit intentus, vigiliis et orationibus subiectus et sub custodia semper duorum fratrum spiritalium ambulet, nulla prava locutione vel consilio deinceps iuvenibus coniungendus” (308, 7–11). Peter clearly thinks that sexual relations are only likely to occur between younger and older members of the community, or younger and younger together. Otherwise, his solution is no solution at all. This is one of the most intriguing implications of his prescribed penance: there is no way to extirpate the possibility of sexual attraction between men other than to choose, somewhat arbitrarily, that it can only be occur under pre-ordained conditions and that it can only be contained by the penance he proffers. As Foucault might say, this disciplinary practice is then eroticized both as it defines erotic pathways and points toward transgressive possibilities.
60. “quatinus si sodomite ex semetipsis nesciunt pensare quod sunt, ab ipsis saltem valeant edoceri, cum quibus sunt communi orationis ergastulo deputati” (307, 7–9).
61. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 97.
62. For a fuller discussion of this Foucauldian notion as it relates to theology, see chapter 4, “Male Theology in the Bedroom,” in Jeremy R. Carrette’s *Foucault and Religion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000).
63. “O quam iucundum! O quam insigne spectaculum! Cum Supernus Iudex de coelo prospectat, et homo semetipsum in inferioribus pro suis delictis mittat! Ubi reus ipse, in pectoris sui tribunalibus praesidens, trifarium tenet officium; in corde se constituit iudicem, reum in corpore, manibus se gaudet exhibere tortorem; ac si Deo sanctus poenitens dicat: Non opus est, Domine, ut officio tuo me punire praecipias; ipse mihi manus injicio, ipse de me vindictam capio, vicemque meis peccatis reddo . . . Huic econtra spectaculo assistunt angeli, qui gaudent de peccatore converso; et hoc Deo gaudentes annuntiant, cum jam invisibilis Iudex id ipsum per se delectabiliter cernat. Haec est hostia quae viva mactatur, ad Deum per angelos oblata defertur; et sic humani corporis victima ili unico sacrificio quod in ara crucis oblatum est, invisibiliter permiscetur; et sic in uno thesauro sacrificium omne reconditur, videlicet et quod unumquodque membrum, et quod caput omnium obtulit electorum” (Opusc. 43: *De laude flagellum*, PL 145, cols. 679–685; cited in Blum, *St. Peter Damian*, p. 117).
64. “Dic, vir evirate, responde, homo effeminate, quid in viro quaeris, quod in temetipso invenire non possis? Quam diversitatem sexuum, quae varia liniamenta membrorum, quam mollitiem, quam carnalis illecebrae teneritudinem, quam lubrici vultus iocunditatem? Terreat te, quaeso, vigor masculini aspectus, abhorreat

mens tua viriles artus. Naturalis quippe appetitus officium est, ut hoc unusquisque extrinsecus quaerat, quod intra suae facultatis claustra reperire non valeat. Si ergo te contrectatio masculine carnis oblectat, verte manus in te et scito, quia quicquid apud te non invenis, in alieno corpore in vacuum quaeris” (313, 13–22).

65. Bersani, *Homos*, pp. 149–150.
66. Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Reclaiming Sodom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 257.
67. Peter alludes to such a moment of forgetting of the self in this citation from the *Liber Gomorrhianus*: “Once this poisonous serpent has sunk its fangs into this unfortunate man, he is deprived of all moral sense, his memory fails, and the mind’s vision is darkened. Unmindful of God, he also forgets his own identity. This disease erodes the foundations of faith, saps the vitality of hope, dissolves the bond of love” (31).
68. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 143.
69. All of these citations occur in the context of Bersani’s discussion of Gide’s *L’Immoraliste* in *Homos*, pp. 122, 125, and 126.
70. “Saepe cernebam praesentissimo mantis intuitu Christum clavis affixum, in cruce pendentem, avidusque suspiciebam stillantem supposito ore cruore” (Opusc. 19, *PL* 145, col. 432; cited in McNulty, *Peter Damian*, p. 32).
71. “Statue quoque tibi certamen assiduum adversus carnem, armatus semper assiste contra inopportunam libidinis rabiem. Si luxurie flamma in ossibus estuat, protinus illam memoria perpetui ignis extinguat. Si callidus insidiator lubricam carnis speciem obicit, ilico mens ad mortuorum sepulchra oculum dirigat et quid illic suave tactu, quid delectabile visu reperiatur, sollerter attendat” (323, 17–22).
72. Carrette, *Foucault and Religion*, p. 72.
73. “Cum ergo sancta quaelibet anima Redemptori suo veraciter in amore conjunctitur, cum ei denique velut in sponsali thalamo per oblectationis intimae glutinum copulatur . . .” (*Epistolae* lib. IV, 16. *PL* 144, col. 333; cited in McNulty, *Peter Damian*, p. 30).
74. John Boswell (*Christianity*, p. 253 n.37), commenting on these same passages says: “‘Hunting’ and terminology related to it figure prominently in poetry by or about gay people, and it is possible that it represented what ‘cruising’ describes in the gay subculture of today, although as a metaphor it is obvious enough not to require any special explanation.” This association might better explain John’s puzzling and vehement objections to what must have been a very common and necessary practice for most people outside of the major cities. It is interesting, in light of Boswell’s suggestion, to note that William Rufus is killed during a hunting expedition and that Guigemar is kidnapped and Narcisus entrapped by the image in the water during the course of hunting. Since all three scenes are in one way or another linked with homoeroticism or improper gendering (Guigemar and the doe/stag, Narcisus and the male image, William Rufus and his murder amongst his “degenerate” mates) it would appear that this association is worthy of further research. See chapter 6 in Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*,

- trans. T. Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 415–416; and Kolve, “Ganymede,” p. 1022.
75. Acteon, son of the daughter of Cadmus, one day observed Artemis bathing. In revenge, she transformed him into a stag and he was chased and killed by his own hounds. See Ovid’s account in Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses*.
76. Daniel D. McGarry, trans., *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium* (Berkeley and London: 1955, repr. Gloucester, Mass.: Greenwood Press, 1971), p. 13. Hereafter, page numbers cited in the text refer to this edition.
77. Hunting is often associated with violence, aggression, and displays of hyper-masculinity, even today, but such characterizations are somewhat culture-bound. Anthropologists often see hunting as providing a spiritual and economic contribution to society: “It is a creative, even tender activity, a triumph of utility in the service of others – truly a kind of indirect nourishing or nurturing” (David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990], p. 116; citing Ernestine Friedl, *Women and Men: An Archeologist’s View* [New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1975], pp. 12–32). Clearly there was a distinction made amongst twelfth-century nobility and intellectuals between hunting for provisions and hunting as a sport of excess and narcissistic self-promotion.
78. Matthew Bennett (“Military Masculinity in England and Northern France c. 1050–c. 1225,” in Dawn M. Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* [London and New York: Longman, 1999], pp. 73–74) suggests as well that hunting together with other boys formed an important part of the apprenticeship undergone by aristocratic youths in knightly training. Hunting served as a substitute for war but also as a ritualistic bonding experience in which co-operation and loyalty were nurtured. The ways in which such bonding experiences exploit homosocial and homoerotic codes in all-male communities is still a fraught topic today.
79. As Bruce Holsinger shows (*Music, Body, and Desire*, p. 158), these attitudes and the metaphors in which they are encoded were widespread amongst twelfth-century Parisian intellectuals. The introduction of polyphony at Notre Dame brought to the surface a sexual anxiety that associated unconventional sexual practices with musical technique even much earlier in the century.
80. See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s insightful work on the monster as cipher for boundaries and the transgression of boundaries: Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages*. Medieval Culture Series 17 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
81. John is alluding to Macrobius III, xiii., 4.5; cited in *Frivolity* trans. Pike, p. 371.
82. See Lavine’s diatribe in *Eneas* for her use of this same charge (“il voldroit deduit de garçon, / n’aime se males putains non” [9133–9134]) and Nature’s reasoning in Alain de Lille’s *De planctu naturae* (chapter 5). In all cases, sodomites are guilty by virtue of, and in some sense defined by, their association of commerce with sex.
83. In the *Roman des sept sages*, the King, who must be “heterosexualized” and lose weight through more or less forced sexual relations with a woman, is given as his

plaything the wife of his seneschal. This experience converts him to the joys of heterosex and there is no further mention of his being a sodomite; but, following John's logic, the seneschal himself is now a type of sodomite, selling his wife for his King's salvation. See Mary Speer, ed., *Le Roman des sept sages de Rome* (Lexington, Ky.: French Forum Publishers, 1989).

84. As noted by Pike, John is not quoting the Vulgate exactly, at least not the version that we know today. John Boswell (*Christianity*, p. 216 n.30) calls this passage a "pastiche of classical quotations" and asserts that it probably does not represent John's true feelings on the matter. I am not so sure about that, though John's diversionary tactics in raising the topic do indicate some reluctance to broach it. Even when he has broached it, however, he begins by treating it obliquely. When he hits the nail on the head, however, it is with some considerable force.
85. Dyan Elliott's "Pollution," is a brilliant and comprehensive exploration of how involuntary ejaculation was conceptualized by a number of theologians. Her conclusion, that such ejaculations evoked considerable gender anxiety through the dissolution of the fiction of control that John would say is endemic to masculinity, is fascinating and generates new ways of reading such comments in the *Policraticus* and Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae* (trans. James J. Sheridan [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980]). See also Leyser, "Masculinity in Flux," pp. 103–120.
86. This would be my explanation: not necessarily that John or his immediate predecessors approved of same-sex relations but that they held to a code of non-disclosure that John and his generation also helped to eliminate.
87. J. H. Harvey, *The Plantagenets* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1948).
88. John Gillingham, "Some Legends of Richard the Lionheart: Their Development and Their Influence," in Janet L. Nelson, ed., *Richard Coeur de Lion in History and Myth* (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1992), pp. 51–69. The same argument is made in the more recent book on Richard (*Richard I* [New York and London: Yale University Press, 1999]). See Ann Trinidade's *Berengaria: In Search of Richard the Lionheart's Queen* (Dublin: Four Court's Press, 1999), pp. 190–195, for some judicious comments which counter Gillingham's assessment.
89. Stephen C. Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
90. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
91. Roger of Howden in Gisèle Besson and Michèle Brossard-Dandré, eds., *Richard Coeur de Lion* (Paris: 10/18, 1989), p. 80.
92. See the texts collected in Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, pp. 25–32. These editors note, however, that such omens were standard fare in royal chronicles. All translations from this edition are my own.
93. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 301. William of Newburgh was an Augustinian monk whose *Historia rerum Anglicarum* covers nine hundred years of history. He was not an intimate of the court and bases his contemporary history largely on others' accounts of events.

94. Merlin had predicted that the sons of Henry would rise up against him (“The lion cubs will awaken and leaving behind the woods will come to hunt within the walls of the cities; they will perpetrate a horrendous massacre of those who stand in their way and cut out the tongue of the bulls. They will put chains around the necks of lions and bring up the ways of the ancestral times” [Benedict of Peterborough in Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 34]). Several prophetic dreams are also recounted. Gerald of Wales tells of one that occurred to Saint Godric the hermit which begins with Henry and his four sons lying before an altar. When they arose they wiped the dirt from their shoes and clothing on the altar cloths, then climbed atop the crucifix and let fall their urine and excrement upon the altar. In the final tableau, Henry and two of the sons, Richard and John, are literally tearing each other to pieces at the foot of the altar, while Geoffrey and Henry fade from view.
95. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 27. Gerald of Wales (aka Giraut de Barri) was a liaison officer, chaplain, and secretary to Henry II (from 1184 until Henry’s death in 1189) and served as an advisor to John during his expedition to Ireland in 1185–86. He set out for the crusades in 1189 but was sent back to England after the death of King Henry. He served Richard briefly. After Richard’s return from captivity, Gerald ceased to serve the court directly and lobbied incessantly to become Bishop of Saint David’s in Wales. He spent nearly four years lobbying for this appointment in Rome to no avail and spent his last twenty years (from age sixty on) writing. He produced at least seventeen volumes. In his early *Topographia Hibernica*, his assessment of Henry II and his sons is quite positive, not surprising since he needed their support to fulfill his ambitions. By the time he composed the *De Principis instructione* (c. 1199–1216), he had soured considerably on the Plantagenets. His final assessment of Richard was of opportunity lost, a man chosen by God for great things who never accomplished them because of personal flaws. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 390; Thorpe, *Journey through Wales*, Introduction; and David Rollo, “Gerald of Wales’ *Topographia Hibernica*: Sex and the Irish Nation,” *Romanic Review* 86, 2 (March 1995), pp. 169–190; and *Historical Fabrication, Ethnic Fable and French Romance in Twelfth-Century England* (Lexington, Ky.: French Forum Publishers, 1998).
96. Conrad’s claim to the throne of Jerusalem was supported by Philippe Auguste. Richard, on the other hand, supported the more “legitimate” claim of Guy de Lusignan, the widower of the heir to the throne, Sibylle, whose son, King Baudouin V, had died in 1186.
97. Ralph (or Raoul) of Coggeshall’s *Chronicon Anglicanum* covers the period 1086–1210. The section dealing with Richard is concerned largely with the Crusade, his captivity, and his death. Not an eye-witness to the events chronicled, Ralph’s portrayal of Richard contributed to the legend of Richard as the great warrior King (Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 391).
98. The two girls, Marguerite and Aélis, were the daughters of Constance of Castille, Louis’s second wife and Eleanore’s replacement. Marguerite was married to Henry at the age of two (her husband was five); Aélis was never married to Richard.

99. “Philipo. . . . quem ipse in tantum honoravit per longum tempus quod singulis diebus in una mensa ad unum catinum manducabant, et in noctibus non separabat eos lectus. Et dilexit eum rex Franciae quasi animam suam; et in tantum se mutuo diligebant, quod propter vehementem dilectionem quae inter illos erat, dominus rex Angliae nimio stupore arreptus admirabatur quid hoc esset.” Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, pp. 320–321.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 332–333. Roger of Hoveden (or Howden) was a clerk who served Henri II as diplomat, annalist, and counselor. His *Chronica* cover the period from the seventh century to the year 1201. He depended largely on the chronicle of Benedict of Peterborough for some of the details and events that he discusses.
101. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 333.
102. Richard was held captive, first in Austria and then in Germany, from October 1192 to January 1194 (Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 395).
103. Richard’s *De rebus gestis Ricardi Primi* covers just four years of Richard’s reign from his coronation in 1189 to his departure from the Holy Land in 1192. He generally expresses admiration for Richard (Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 393).
104. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, pp. 93 and 104 n.1.
105. Juvenal, *The Satires*, trans. N. Ruud, intro and notes W. Barr (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 128–132. “tristis abit et, quod potuit tamen, ultima cellam / clausit adhuc ardens rigidae tentigine vulvae, / et lassata viris necdum satiata recessit, / obscurisque genis turpis fumoque lucernae / foeda lupanaris tulit ad pulvinar odorem.” The same citation can be found in the *Eneas* romance, again with a strongly sexual connotation. There the Trojan warrior, Tarcon, is mocking the woman warrior, Camile, for fighting like a man. Telling her that she should more appropriately be doing battle under bedclothes with him and the men he will share her with, he promises that after a vigorous group rape: “vos porriez estre lassee, / pas n’en seriez saolee.” (you would be tired, but you would not be satisfied [*Eneas*, ll. 7105–7106]).
106. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 13.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
108. Eleanore’s daughter, Jeanne, had married William the Good, the Norman King of Sicily, but upon his death in 1189, Tancred, his illegitimate cousin, had taken power. One of Richard and Eleanore’s reasons for having come to Sicily was to return Jeanne and much of her dowry and William’s gifts to Henry II to England, against Tancred’s wishes. Eleanore clearly also intended to marry Richard and Berengaria as a way of securing his power and extending his influence.
109. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 113.
110. See Trinidad, *Berengaria*, for more information on her fate.
111. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 278.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 280–281.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 287.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 296. Coming from Gerald, who had no compunction about discussing the sodomitic past of the Welsh, it is surprising to see him evoking unmentionable topics, though the rank of Richard might have something to do with his reticence. Then again, reversion to this topos is an almost sure-fire way of identifying sodomy.
119. Pike, trans., *Frivolity*, 205.
120. See, for example, Bertran de Born's songs 80, 21: *Ges no me desconort . . .* and 80, 29: *Non puosc mudar . . .* in W. Paden, T. Sankovitch, and P. H. Ståblein, eds., *The Poems of the Troubadour Bertran de Born* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 231, 370; and W. Burgwinkle, *Razos and Troubadour Songs* (New York: Garland, 1990), pp. 80, 107.
121. Pike, trans., *Frivolity*, 208.
122. It was in 1190–1191, during Richard's reign, that the tomb of Arthur was "discovered" at Glastonbury Abbey. Whether or not it was, as has been asserted, a publicity stunt to raise money after the disastrous fire of 1184 or a political ploy to show that Arthur was definitively dead and would not be returning to help the Welsh cause, the discovery could certainly have been exploited to add luster to the Plantagenet line (Geoffrey Ashe, *Avalonian Quest* [London: Methuen, 1982]).
123. Eneas is either a sodomite by association (all Trojans are sodomites, as the Queen tells us in the romance of *Eneas*) or a bad heterosexual, in that he used and deserted Dido and stands responsible for her death.
124. John Gillingham, *The Life and Times of Richard I* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 168.
125. *The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. Thorpe, p. 37 n.1.
126. *De vita Galfredi* in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, vol. IV, ed. James F. Dimock (London: Roll Series, 1868), p. 423; cited in Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 229 n.69.
127. Besson and Brossard-Dandré, *Richard*, p. 315.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 317.
129. *Ibid.*, pp. 314–316.
130. *Fight Club*, screenplay Jim Uhl, based on novel by Chuck Palahniuk, dir. David Fincher (Prod. 2000/Regency, TCF/Fox, 1999).
131. "Tant qu'il y aura des hommes . . .," *Nouvel Observateur* (November 4–10, 1999), pp. 60–61. To their statement I would have to add that if this is a gay fantasy it can only be so from within a heterosexual matrix.

3 MAKING PERCEVAL: DOUBLE-BINDING AND SIÈGES PÉRILLEUX

1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 210–211. Originally published as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 289.
3. Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 8. Rose is citing Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" (in *From Max Weber: Essays in*

- Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills [London: Routledge, 1991], p. 78). A portion of this chapter appeared as an article entitled “*Sièges périlleux: Sodomy and Social Control in the Grail Legends*,” in *Romance Languages Annual* 9 (1998), pp. 27–34. I thank the editors for their permission to include some of that material in this book.
4. Gerbert de Montreuil, *La continuation de Perceval*, 3 vols., ed. Mary Williams (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1922 [vol. 1 (series volume 28)], 1925 [vol. 2 (50)]); ed. Marguerite Oswald, vol. 3 (101) (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1975).
 5. Curtius, *European Literature*, pp. 113–117.
 6. On *Eneas*, see Burgwinkle, “Knighting the Classical Hero”; Simon Gaunt, “From Epic to Romance”; Noah D. Guynn, “Eternal Flame: State-Building, Deviant Architecture, and the Monumentality of Sexual Deviance in the *Eneas*,” *GLQ* 6, 2 (April 2000), pp. 287–319; and Daniel Poirion, “De l’*Enéide* à l’*Eneas*: mythologie et moralization,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 19, 3 (1976), pp. 213–229. On Marie de France see chapter 4. See lines 3535–3588 in Gautier de Tournay’s *Histoire de Gille de Chyn*. On Heldris de Cornouaille’s *Roman de Silence*, see Peter Allen, “The Ambiguity of Silence: Gender, Writing, and the *Roman de Silence*,” in Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney, eds., *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989); Simon Gaunt, “The Significance of Silence,” *Paragraph* 13, 2 (1990), pp. 202–216; Regina Psaki, ed., *Le roman de Silence*, ed. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Garland, 1991); and Sharon Kinoshita, “Heldris de Cornuaille’s *Roman de Silence* and the Feudal Politics of Lineage,” *PMLA* 110, 3 (May 1995), pp. 397–409.
 7. In one scene of Gerbert de Montreuil’s *Continuation de Perceval*, e.g., Perceval wears around his neck a white shield with a red cross upon it, a clear allusion to holy orders of knighthood such as the Templars and Hospitallers (ll. 9375–9376).
 8. For the *First Continuation*, see *Continuations of the Old French Perceval: The Second Continuation*, vols. I–III, ed. W. Roach (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press/The American Philosophical Society, 1949–52) and the French translation in *Première Continuation de Perceval*, trans. Colette-Anne Van Coolput-Storms (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1993). For the second (Wauchier) and third (Manessier) *Continuations*, see vol. IV (1971) and V (1983) in the same series edited by Roach. For the *Roman du graal*, see *Queste del saint graal*, ed. Albert Pauphilet (Paris: Champion, 1923), trans. as *Quest of the Holy Grail*, intro. P. M. Matarasso (London: Penguin, 1969); and finally, for the *Roman de l’Etoire dou graal*, see *Robert de Boron: Le Roman de l’Etoire dou graal*, ed. William A. Nitze (Paris: Champion, 1983).
 9. On the spiritual reading, see M. Lot-Borodine, “*Le Conte du graal* de Chrétien de Troyes et sa présentation symbolique,” *Romania* 77 (1956), pp. 235–288, and H. Adolf, “*Visio pacis*,” in *Holy City and Grail: An Attempt at an Inner History of the Grail Legend* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1960). On the Celtic reading, see Jean Marx, *La Légende arthurienne et le graal* (Paris: PUF, 1952) and Roger S. Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (Cardiff and New York: Columbia University Press, 1963). For psychoanalytical readings, see Charles Méla, *La reine et le graal: la conjointure dans les romans du Graal de Chrétien*

- de Troyes au livre de Lancelot* (Paris: Seuil, 1984) and Jean-Charles Huchet, “Le nom et l’image,” in *Essais de clinique littéraire du texte médiéval* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1998). For a social reading, see Brigitte Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail: A Social Reading of Chrétien de Troyes’s “Conte du Graal”* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) and for how Perceval is discussed as a masculine archetype by those with a Jungian bent, see Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1999) and Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York and London: Doubleday, 1989).
10. See Elliott, “Pollution,” for an extended discussion of this issue as it pertains to involuntary sexual pleasure.
 11. See Girard’s *Scapegoat*, and Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* and *Totem and Taboo* for its inspiration.
 12. Brigitte Cazelles’s canny and original reading in the *Unholy Grail* comes closest to pinpointing the sacrificial nature of Perceval’s quest. In this social interpretation, she identifies two opposing factions: one representing the territorial ambitions of the Arthurian court and another representing the family interests of Perceval. The young knight is asked, without ever understanding the political implications of his actions, to defend and demand retribution for his family’s interests (Grail castle, etc.) while serving as an Arthurian knight, i.e., serving the very interests which have decimated his family and inheritance.
 13. Miranda Griffin and Ben Ramm both take up this question in as yet unpublished dissertations from the University of Cambridge on the grail as *objet a*: as object and cause in Griffin’s case and as abject remainder in Ramm’s.
 14. The frequent ambiguous reminders that all but Perceval are cognizant of the crime/sin that has been committed suggests that it is not of his doing but more likely that of a member of his family. The dead father is one obvious candidate; the at least potentially incestuous mother is another. As Jacques Lacan says in discussing his notion of the Symbolic: “I am one of its links. It is the discourse of my father, for instance, in so far as my father made mistakes which I am absolutely condemned to reproduce – that’s what we call the super-ego” (Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II: The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, notes John Forrester [New York: Norton, 1988]; originally published as *Le Séminaire, Livre II: Le Moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse, 1954–1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller [Paris: Seuil, 1978]).
 15. Perceval only refers to his quest laconically and in terms that have been given to him by someone else. Thus, rather than say that he seeks to impose peace on the land, he says only that he must find the Fisher King and ask his questions. He thus acts out the utterances of those around him whose words make sense, retrospectively, of his experience and whose predictions “become the speech act by which an already operative necessity is confirmed” (Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2000], p. 64). Perceval is the prototype of the short-sighted man who claims always to be acting independently without every realizing that his acts are already inscribed within what is presented as an inevitable symbolic circuit (Lacan, *Seminar Book II*, p. 123).

16. Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 220–221.
17. *Ibid.*, 219.
18. *Ibid.*, 212.
19. *Ibid.*, 211.
20. Foucault cites the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, with its institution of obligatory annual confession, as one of the key moments in the development of new techniques of subjection involving giving witness, accounting for the self: “For a long time, the individual had derived his sense of authenticity through reference to others and the manifestation of his links to others (family, allegiance, protection); but then he was validated by the discourse of truth through which he was able, and obliged, to account for himself. The avowal of truth was inscribed into the heart of processes of individualization through power” (*The History of Sexuality*, pp. 78–79).
21. *Le chevalier de la charette* offers a parallel to these scenes, in which Lancelot and his “pechié” are instantly known to one and all. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen put it: “Everyone he meets recognizes him at once as the Knight of the Cart. . . . How all the world beholds this one definitional gesture is left unexplained. The scopic regime that records his actions and registers its disapproval is ultimately the ghostly trace left by the author, as he forms a temporary subjectivity for the audience” (“Masoch/Lancelotism,” *New Literary History* 28 [1997], p. 241). This subjectivity, this positioning of the reader, is at once persecutory and masochistic, as we both participate in the inculcation of the young knight and learn to locate our own fatal failing.
22. Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 201–202.
23. See the famous passage in Chrétien (ll. 491–562) where the mother instructs Perceval in chivalry, Christianity, and heterosexuality as she bids him adieu. All citations from *Le conte du graal* are taken from Charles Méla, *Le conte du graal*, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans*, ed. Michel Zink (Paris: Livres de Poche, 1994).
24. *Perlesvaus (Le haut livre du graal)*, ed. W. A. Nitze and T. Atkinson Jenkins, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932–37).
25. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 26.
26. Simon Gaunt (“Epic to Romance,” 26) rightly points out that this “dialogical” construction of masculinity – i.e. its dynamic “always under construction” quality – is complicated by the intense misogyny that characterizes almost all writing of the period, from the Church Fathers to romance. The Other with whom the masculine is in dialogue is already so fantastical or misrepresented that the dialogical nature of masculinity ends up being played out largely through interaction with other men.
27. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 28.
28. This is Dylan Evans’ explanation of Lacan’s distinction between ego-ideal and ideal-ego (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* [New York and London: Routledge, 1996], p. 52).
29. This scene is echoed in the slightly later *lai* of *Tyolet*, where the eponymous knight, a homologue in every sense of Perceval, has this reaction upon first seeing a knight: “So tell me, knight/beast, for the love of God and his feast, if there are other beasts as beautiful as you” [Or me dites, chevalier beste, / por Deu e por la seue feste, /

- se il est duques de tiex bestes / ne de si beles con vos estes] (Alexandre Micha, *Lais féeriques des XII^e et XIII^e siècles* [Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1992], 192: ll. 190–193).
30. See Girard ("Love and Hate in *Yvain*," in B. Cazelles and C. Méla, eds., *Modernité au moyen âge: le défi du passé* [Geneva: Droz, 1990], pp. 249–262) for more on this topic as it relates to the climactic battle between Yvain and Gauvain at the close of Chrétien's *Le chevalier au lion*.
 31. This is the castle in which Gauvain is imprisoned at the end of Chrétien's *Roman* and in which he is united with his female lineage. It is described very much like a secular convent, or women's community, especially in the *Second Continuation*. There, the lady/abbess explains to Perceval that: "Ici nos somes assamblees, / Si somes totes d'un parage, / D'une maniere et d'un aage. / Ici, tot sans mantir, avons / Qanque nos plaist et nos volons . . . Ici fis fonder ce chastel, / . . . vos plevs / C'onques maçons n'i mist les mains . . . / Ainz le firent les quatre pucelles / Cointes et avenanz et belles" (ll. 24620–24632).
(Here we are assembled together, all of the same class, manners and age. Here, I tell you truly, we have everything we need and want. I founded the castle here . . . and I promise you that never did a mason set a hand to it; no, it was built by four beautiful, gracious and agreeable young women).
 32. Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1991).
 33. John Baldwin (*Language of Sex*, p. 233) points to Tiresias's revelation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that it is women who derive the greater pleasure from sex than men and to the *Ars amatoria* as proof that the question of female desire was not new to the Middle Ages. See also the *fabliau*, *La dame qui aveine demanoit pour Morel sa provende avoir* which offers an example of how female sexual desire was figured as omnivorous and destructive, with the woman as sexual aggressor (*Contes pour rire? Fabliaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles* [Paris: 10/18, 1977], p. 176).
 34. An interesting example of this double vision is the requirement that knights who present themselves at the Castle of the Maidens must strike twice on the table with the hammer at the entry. Those who respect the silence of the inhabitants after the first blow leave unsatisfied. Those who persist and refuse to respect the first "no" are rewarded with a meal and night's lodging – a paradoxical attitude, to say the least, in a text that also condemns rape (*Second Continuation*, ll. 24646–24657).
 35. "Et cil qui avoit desraissnie / Vers lui la terre a la pucele / Blanchefflor, s'amie la bele, / Delez li s'aaise et delite, / Et si fust soe toute quite / La terre, si il li plaüst / Que son coraige ailors n'aüst. / Mais d'une [autre] molt plus li tient, / Que de sa mere li sovient / Que il vit pasmee cheoir" [(And he who had saved Blancheffleur, his beautiful *amie*, and her land, lay with her enjoying their pleasure, and all of her land would have been his if he had wanted it and agreed to leave his heart with her. But there is another who holds his heart more tightly, for at that moment he thinks of his mother whom he saw fall in a faint (ll. 2850–2859)].
 36. Gerbert includes in his narrative many of the elements found in Chrétien's original almost as if he were consciously rewriting it, and he refers to it specifically in

- ll. 6984–6985 (“Ce nous dist Crestiens de Troie / Qui de Percheval comencha . . .”). His version includes the appearance of the *vieille laide*, of Gornemont and his training of the young knight, of Perceval’s mother’s instructions, the hermit’s remonstrations, etc. He was clearly familiar with his model and likely had both it and the first two continuations before him as he wrote. Gerbert refers directly or indirectly to many other literary moments. *Jongleurs* and *menestrals* appear frequently at courts where they sing *lais* (*Chèvrefeuille* is mentioned by name); Tristan appears and Gerbert adds a continuation to his story as well. Interspersed in Perceval’s travels are lyric moments in which the knight appreciates the *reverdi* of nature, bird songs, love. *Losengiers* are criticized and *menestrals* lauded exactly as they might be in a *trouvère* song. The same sort of interpolations from other literary works, though to an even larger degree, can be found in his *Roman de la violette* (ed. D. L. Buffum [Paris: SATF (72), 1928]).
37. “Que nus hom ne doit atouchier / A sa moillier fors saintement / Et par deus choses solement: / L’une si est por engenner, / L’autre por pechié eschiver . . .” (For no man should touch his wife except in a holy manner, and for two reasons only: one is to have children, the other to avoid sin . . . [ll. 6888–6892]).
 38. See Crane, *Gender and Romance*; Gaunt, “Straight Minds/‘Queer’ Wishes”; and Dyan Elliott’s *Spiritual Marriage*.
 39. On Gauvain as a character across the whole range of Arthurian literature, see Keith Busby, *Gauvain in Old French Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980).
 40. Interpellation is the word used by Louis Althusser in his classic description of the process of hailing in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. B. Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).
 41. Examples of popular culture’s fascination with stories of interpellation and victimization abound. Films like *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Truman Show* actually come closer to the claustrophobic ambience of the Grail than does a more self-conscious adaptation like *The Fisher King*.
 42. A similar episode occurs in the Guerehet episode that closes the *First Continuation* (ll. 8348–8496).
 43. Alexandre Leupin discusses these inscriptions and mysterious letters in terms of lack: “A plusieurs niveaux, l’écriture du bref est comme trouée, incomplète, défaillante, mettant en scène le manque; tout d’abord, bien entendu, en réclamant une impossible vengeance . . .” (On several levels, the text of the letter is full of holes, incomplete, unable to sustain itself, stages its own lack; firstly, of course, in that it calls for an impossible vengeance [250–253]), in “La faille et l’écriture dans les continuations du *Perceval*,” *Moyen Age* 88 (1982), pp. 237–269.
 44. Gerbert’s text is often called an interpolation between Wauchier de Denan’s *Second Continuation* and Manessier’s third. It is found in only two manuscripts (A: Paris, BN fr. 12576; and B: Paris, BN fr. 6614) but in just that position, though the second of the two contains only a fragment from the Manessier text. It is unlikely that Gerbert knew Manessier’s text, in fact they were probably being composed at the same time, but it does work to place Gerbert’s between the two even though

Manessier's begins where Gerbert's does, at the final lines of the *Second Continuation*. Manessier's text appears in seven manuscripts, and there are twelve manuscripts containing the *First* and *Second Continuations*. The manuscripts are unusually coherent in that the continuations usually appear together with Chrétien's text, even when not all of the continuations are represented (Roach, ed., *Continuations*, vol. V, xv). In Leupin's elegant formulation ("faillie," 260) Gerbert's manuscript is the missing piece which, inserted by Perceval into the chink in the sword, completes the cycle/sword, or at least allows one the illusion of completion.

45. "Correlatively, the formation of the I is symbolized in dreams by a fortress, or a stadium – its inner arena and enclosure surrounded by marshes and rubbish-tips, dividing it into two opposed fields of contest where the subject flounders in quest of the lofty, remote inner castle whose form . . . symbolizes the id in a quite startling way" (Jacques Lacan in *Ecrits* [Paris: Seuil, 196], trans. A. Sheridan as *Ecrits: A Selection* [New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977], p. 5).
46. Sara Sturm-Maddox contends that it is Perceval's overweening pride that has kept him from learning the secrets and repairing the sword, but she also admits at the conclusion of her discussion that "we have not learned the precise nature of his qualification to receive the answers concerning Lance and Grail" ("*Tout est par senefiance*: Gerbert's *Perceval*," *The Arthurian Yearbook II*, ed. Keith Busby [New York and London: Garland, 1992], p. 205).
47. Perceval finds and kills the white stag with the help of the lady's dog but almost immediately an evil maiden steals the dog away and will not return him until Perceval has liberated a tomb from a knight who lives within it. While fighting this knight, another unidentified knight steals the stag's head and Perceval spends the rest of the romance pursuing quest within imbedded quest.
48. Althusser, *Ideology*, p. 162.
49. Larry Scanlon, in the course of a very interesting discussion about excommunication as an exclusionary curse, says this: "But its political purpose remained the same, to police communal boundaries, to protect and define the community through the power of exclusion." See his article, "Unspeakable Pleasures: Alain de Lille, Sexual Regulation and the Priesthood of Genius," *Romanic Review* 86, 2 (March 1995), p. 237.
50. Jo Ann McNamara sees the incitement to celibacy as a key moment in the reshaping of the gender system in the twelfth century: "The imposition of celibacy on the clergy and clerical monopoly of the universities set up to produce a new professional class enforced masculinist claims for the incapacities of women . . ."; and yet "men without women, if deprived of sexuality, came dangerously close to traditional visions of femininity. Celibacy deprived its practitioners of the necessary 'Other' upon which to construct a gender persona" ("*The Herrenfrage*," pp. 8–9).
51. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977).
52. Bernard Cerquolini, ed., *Le Roman du graal par Robert de Boron* (Paris: 10/18, 1981).
53. Steven Kruger's work on "The Spectral Jew" suggests other fruitful ways of reading this passage (*New Medieval Literatures* 2 [1998], pp. 9–35).

54. Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus* (1049) contains an interesting passage that might shed some light on Gerbert's curious pit of sodomy. In denouncing clerical sodomy, Peter says: "those who fall from the dignity of sacred orders into the chasm of sodomy are thrown into hell in justly deserved perpetual damnation" (qui a sacri ordinis dignitate in sodomie voraginem corrunt, in perpetue dampnationis baratram merito devoluuntur [Reindel, ed., *Die Briefe*, 328: 2–3]). This passage is cited in Scanlon, "Unmanned," p. 39 n. 7.
55. The *lai* of *Guingamor* offers another fine example of this logic at work. In that *lai*, a young knight is propositioned by the wife of his lord. When he refuses her offer, she takes revenge by calling for a hunt of the white boar (*le sanglier blanc*). Her husband, the King, responds: "You know I hate to hear any mention of that quest. Never has any man who undertook it returned alive" (Ce sachez vos, molt me desplest / Qant en nul leu en oi parler. Onques nus hon n'i pot aler qui puis em petüst reperier [see Micha, *Lais*, 72: ll. 172–175]). The Queen, of course, understands that Guingamor has no choice but to volunteer: "Sire, by the faith that I owe you, not for anything that anyone could offer in this world would I give up the chance to hunt that boar tomorrow" (Sire, en la foi que je vos doi, / ne leroie por rien qui soit, / qui tot le monde me donroit, / que demain ne chaz le senglier [ll. 226–229]).
56. Sara Sturm-Maddox makes this argument in another context. She postulates that the reason Perceval's sword breaks as he bangs on the door of the castle in the woods where he will learn how to repair his sword, is that he, too, has tried to take heaven by force and must be punished ("Seneffiance," p. 199).
57. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen offers a reading of a similar use of the topos in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that is consonant with my own: "In romance the beheading topos lost its political resonance and became once more what it seems originally to have been: an exemplary rite of passage rather than an ideological pronouncement." See "Decapitation and Coming of Age: Constructing Masculinity and the Monstrous," *Arthurian Yearbook III*, ed. Keith Busby (New York and London: Garland, 1993), p. 177.
58. Leupin's ("Faille") reading ties this episode to similar ones in the other three *Continuations* in which a *faillie* (gap) in signification is highlighted. He then posits that language, writing itself, is instrumental in bridging or obscuring these gaps.
59. In Evans' succinct formulation of The Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis (*Dictionary*): "The real is thus no longer simply opposed to the imaginary, but is also located beyond the symbolic. Unlike the symbolic, which is constituted in terms of oppositions such as that between presence and absence, 'there is no absence in the real' (S2, 313) . . . [the real] is outside language and 'resists symbolization absolutely' (S1, 66). The real is the 'impossible' (S11, 167) because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic order, and impossible to attain in any way. It is this character of impossibility and of resistance to symbolization which lends the real its essentially traumatic quality." See Judith Butler's pertinent statement a propos of another context: "What would masculinity 'be' without this

- aggressive circuit of renunciation from which it is wrought? Gays in the military threaten to undo masculinity only because this masculinity is made of repudiated homosexuality” (*Psychic Life*, p. 143).
60. The fairy’s understanding of sexuality would then be consonant with Judith Butler’s notion (*Psychic Life*, p. 134) of a pre-Oedipal renunciation of same-sex attachment, the foreclosure of which is mourned as a prerequisite to heterosexual identity: “Giving up the object becomes possible only on the condition of a melancholic internalization or, what might for our purposes turn out to be even more important, a melancholic incorporation.”
 61. Butler, *Psychic Life*, p. 113.
 62. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask*, screenplay, direction by Woody Allen, produced by Charles H. Joffe, Jack Rollins–Charles H. Joffe and Brodsky Gould production, 1972; CBS/Fox Video, 1983.
 63. Peter Cantor discusses Sodom in just these terms in the virulently homophobic *De vitio sodomitico* section of his *Verbum abbreviatum*, a late twelfth-century text. In John Baldwin’s summary (*Language of Sex*, p. 44): “Divine fire so thoroughly destroyed the region of the Pentapolis that the sea itself became dead, unable to support fish, fowl or ships. Trees bearing comely fruit turned to ashes at mere touch . . .”
 64. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).
 65. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955).
 66. Sedgwick, in using this terminology, acknowledged her debt to D. A. Miller’s *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988). See Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, p. 88.
 67. David Lorenzo Boyd (“Disrupting the Norm: Sodomy, Culture and the Male Body in Peter Damian’s *Liber Gomorrhianus*,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 11 [1994], p. 68) makes this same point: “But as much as Damian emphasises sodomy as an evil in itself, the message that emerges is that sodomy is an evil because the heteronormative order is too weak, too unstable, to withstand deviance.”
 68. Gerbert mentions sodomites only once more in the text. When asked why he persecutes good men, the devil answers that the rest are already his: “li malvais seront tot mien: / li userier, li ypocrite, li desleal, li soudomite, / chiaux laisse je tot en pais vivre, / car Diex en la fin le mes livre” (the bad ones are mine already: the usurers, hypocrites, traitors, sodomites – I let them live in peace because God always lets me have them in the end [ll. 14539–14542]).
 69. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 100.

4 QUEERING THE CELTIC: MARIE DE FRANCE AND THE MEN WHO DON’T MARRY

1. Gayle S. Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy of Sex,’” in R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review,

- 1975), pp. 157–210; rpt. in Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), p. 543.
2. Steven F. Kruger, “Claiming the Pardoner: Toward a Gay Reading of Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale,” *Exemplaria* 6, 1 (Spring 1994), p. 139.
3. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, cited in Pike, trans., *Frivolity*, p. 18.
4. I will be citing text from *Lais de Marie de France*, trans. and notes by Laurence Harf-Lancner, ed. Karl Warnke (Paris: Livre de poche, 1990). The numbers in parentheses following quotations refer first to page numbers, then to line numbers in that edition. Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
5. “Soventes fies en ai veillie” = “many is the time I stayed up all night working on these *lais*” (Prologue, 24, 42). “Sen” is intelligence or learning (22: 16, 20); “surplus,” though it also means surplus or leftover, has been interpreted as “meaning,” “signified,” or, conversely, what goes beyond meaning, what cannot, for whatever reason, be signified: God, sex, pain, and pleasure, intangible rhetorical effects like irony. See R. Howard Bloch, “The Medieval Text – ‘Guigemar’ – As a Provocation to the Discipline of Medieval Studies,” in K. Brownlee, M. S. Brownlee, and S. G. Nichols, eds., *The New Medievalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 99–112.
6. *Guigemar* also follows the *Prologue* in the only other manuscript (N, an Old Norse translation) which contains both texts. In manuscript S (a French thirteenth-century manuscript) *Guigemar* is copied first but the *Prologue* is missing. In the thirteenth-century Picard manuscript P, *Guigemar* follows *Yonec* but precedes *Lanval*. See A. Ewert, ed., *Marie de France, Lais* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976).
7. “Listen, Lords, what Marie has to say, she who is not forgotten in her day” or “she who takes her responsibilities seriously.”
8. “They want to ruin her reputation and so begin to act like dirty, back-stabbing, cowardly dogs, who bite others to further their treasonous designs.”
9. These tendencies are particularly pronounced in the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Grail cycle; and nowhere more than in the *Queste del saint graal*, where the tensions between matter and spirit, sex and abstinence, homo and hetero become central concerns. See Peggy McCracken, “Chaste Subjects: Gender, Heroism, and Desire in the Grail Quest,” in G. Burger and S. F. Kruger, eds., *Queering the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 123–142, on the queer heroes of the Grail romances who “desire not to desire.”
10. Any number of Arthurian tournament scenes correspond to this description. See, for one unusual example, the scene from the romance of *Eneas*, in which Lavine falls in love with Eneas as she gazes down from her tower upon him and his Trojan cohorts (ll. 8047–8460).
11. Joan Ferrante and Robert Hanning (*The Lais of Marie de France* [Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1978], p. 31) translate the passage: “But in forming him nature had so badly erred”; Harf-Lancner (29, 57): “Et pourtant la nature avait commis une faute en le formant”; Harry F. Williams adapts it freely (*Les Lais de Marie de France* [Newark, Del.: Linguatext, 1991], p. 84): “il avait un grand défaut.”

12. Ovid is frequently quoted in early courtly literature and his influence can be found both in the developing rhetoric of romance and lyric and in the situations inspired by his work. He was widely studied in the schools, often in the form of glosses or *sententiae*. He was also widely cited by didactic authors such as Isidore of Seville, Hugh of Saint-Victor, Brunetto Latini, and Vincent de Beauvais. See Ralph J. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's Ars amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto and Epistulae Heroidum* (Munich: Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1986); Aimé Petit, "Aspects de l'influence d'Ovide sur les romans antiques du XIIe siècle," in R. Chevallier, ed., *Actes du colloque: Présence d'Ovide* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1982), pp. 219–240; and Peter L. Allen, *The Art of Love: Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

There is widespread disagreement over whether Marie rejects Ovid even as she uses him or embraces him as a positive model. See Glyn S. Burgess (*The Lais of Marie de France: Text and Context* [Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1987], p. 135) and Robert Hanning ("Courtly Contexts for Urban *Cultus*," *Symposium* 35 [1981], pp. 34–56) for the former view; M. L. Stapleton ("Venus Vituperator," *Classical and Modern Literature* 13 [1993], pp. 283–295) for the latter, and SunHee Kim Gertz ("Echoes and Reflections of Enigmatic Beauty in Ovid and Marie de France," *Speculum* 73 [1998], pp. 372–396) for a very interesting discussion of how Marie's work echoes Ovid, rhetorically and thematically.

13. The song can be found in *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn*, ed. S. J. Nichols, Jr. and John A. Galm (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962).
14. The *vida* for Bernart de Ventadorn says that the Viscount of Ventadorn sent him away from his court when he discovered that Bernart had been having an affair with his wife. Bernart then traveled to the court of the Duchess of Normandy with whom he supposedly had another love affair and for whom he wrote many songs. Only when she married Henry II of England did this idyll end. This account, given by the *vida*, is inaccurate in that Eleanore became Duchess of Normandy only after her marriage. Nonetheless, if we assume the *vida* to be partially correct, it would appear that Bernart worked for Eleanore between 1152 and 1154 (when she was between husbands) and then followed her to England, where he continued to write for both the King and Queen. See Jean Boutière, A. H. Schutz, and I. M. Cluzel, eds., *Biographies des troubadours: textes provençaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles* (Paris: Nizet, 1973), p. 25 n.5.
15. It has even been speculated that Marie was the illegitimate daughter of Godefroy d'Anjou, father of Henry II. This would make her the half-sister of the King. This historical figure became the Abbess of Shaftesbury Abbey in 1181 and died around 1216. See Ewert, ed., *Lais*, p. ix for a survey of the other possible identifications that have been forwarded.
16. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 3): "Now Narcissus / Was sixteen years of age, and could be taken / Either for boy or man; and boys and girls / Both sought his love, but in that slender stripling / Was pride so fierce no boy, no girl, could touch him. / He was out hunting one day, driving deer / Into the nets, when a nymph

named Echo saw him. . . . / She was not the only one on whom Narcissus / Had visited frustration; there were others, / Naiads or Oreads, and young men also, / Till finally one rejected youth, in prayer, / Raised up his hands to Heaven: 'May Narcissus / Love one day, so, himself, and not win over / The creature whom he loves!' (Rolfe Humphries, trans., *The Metamorphoses* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957], pp. 68–70).

17. Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la rose* (c. 1235) is probably the most notable later use of the Narcissus figure (*Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun*, ed. A. Strubel [Paris: Livre de poche, 1992]). The fountain of Narcissus is now an artifact not of nature but of artistic creation, probably built under the direction of the God of Love. The lover is lured there by this God of Love who tracks his movement like a patient hunter, waiting for the best shot ("Et li dieus d'amors m'a seti / Endementiers, en aguetant / Co li vanerres qui atant / que la beste en bon leu se mete. / Por laisser aler la saiete" [ll. 1417–1421]). This is quite different from the earlier figure found in Bernart. Love is no longer a trap set for men by women, or by men for each other using women as the intermediary, but an adventure quest, directed by one man against another, a homosocial romance *par excellence*. See Gaunt, "Bel Accueil," for more on gendering and allegory in the *Rose*, and Ellen Friedrich ("When a Rose is not a Rose: Homoerotic Emblems in the *Roman de la rose*," in Karen J. Taylor, ed., *Gender Transgressions: Crossing the Normative Barrier in Old French Literature* [New York and London: Garland, 1998], pp. 21–43, on homoeroticism. See also Steven Brahm (*Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001]) for queer readings of Narcissus.
18. The text has been dated to c. 1160, i.e., written by a contemporary of the authors of *Eneas*, the *Roman de Thèbes*, Marie de France, and the other poets who benefited from the patronage of Plantagenet court. I will be citing the edition by Raymond Cormier in *Three Ovidian Tales of Love* (New York and London: Garland, 1986).
19. Even in 1160 a fifteen-year-old male was considered too young for marriage. Though knighting would take place at approximately this age, the average marriage age for men was in the early to mid-twenties. Young women, on the other hand, were generally betrothed by the age of fifteen and married by seventeen, at least in aristocratic families. It would not, therefore, be unusual that a fifteen-year-old would be sexually inexperienced or would show some reluctance to give up hunting for a tryst with someone who first appears to be a somewhat mad fairy. See Georges Duby, *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre* (Paris: Hachette, 1981), and *Love and Marriage* on marriage practices.
20. This scene is often taken as a sign of the immense influence of the *Eneas* romance on contemporary authors. Dané's first sighting of Narcissus does recall in many ways the parallel scene in which Lavine first sees Eneas.
21. Narcissus actually explains that they are too young, that he does not want to experience love, and that, being inexperienced, he cannot help her with her pain. When she exposes herself to him, he turns and leaves without another word. The narrator locates his crime in not caring about her pain when he sees her in such distress: "De

- quanqu'ele li dit n'a cure, / Tort a, de rien ne l'aseüre" (126, 527–528). The refusal to recognize and empathize with the other's pain is also the accusation levelled against Perceval in Chrétien's *Conte du graal* (see chapter 3).
22. "Cuide que soit fee de mer / Qui la fontaine ait a garder" (132, 647–648).
 23. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism," cited in Rivkin and Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory*, p. 151.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
 25. Brahm, *Narcissus, Reflecting*, p. 14.
 26. Harf-Lancner, *Lais*, p. 28; I have actually translated Harf-Lancner's translation from the original modern French: "Et ce refus lui était reproché comme une tare par les étrangers comme par ses propres amis" (29, 67–68).
 27. Hanning and Ferrante, eds., *Lais*, p. 32; Nancy Vine Durling, "The Knot, the Belt and the Making of Gulgemar," *Assaus* 6 (1991), p. 29.
 28. I discuss these questions more fully in "Knighting, the Classical Hero".
 29. Thomas Aquinas defines natural law as "participation in eternal law by rational creatures" (Paul E. Sigmund, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics* [New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1988], p. 46), calling it elsewhere "what nature has taught all animals, such as the union of man and woman, the education of children" (50). But he also admits that natural law is not the same for all men since they are "naturally inclined to different things – some to a desire for pleasure, others to a desire for honor and other men to other things" (50); and that natural law can be changed, either by having something added or taken away. It is on this basis that one could argue that if sexual relations fulfill more than one purpose (i.e., not just reproduction but also pleasure and a sense of well-being), as they surely do in the *Lais*, then sexual relations which follow from a natural inclination toward well-being should be included within the category of natural law.
 30. *Guigemar*, for example, has been shown to have links with the first and third branches of the *Mabinogion*, as well as with the romance of *Brut* (Eva Rosenn, "The Sexual and Textual Politics of Marie's Poetics," in Chantal Maréchal, ed., *In Quest of Marie de France, a Twelfth-Century Poet* [Lewiston, Me.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992], p. 231).
 31. Diodorus Siculus, writing in the first century BC, observed that Celtic men generally preferred their own sex to women and that they had no shame about offering themselves to other men. His source of information was Posidonius, a Greek historian who had traveled throughout southern Gaul and reported on his observations. The Roman Strabo wrote in the first century AD that young Celts were shamelessly generous in offering their charms. Though such material can clearly be read as propaganda, the absence of religious overtones or attacks on any one individual indicate that though its purpose may have been to establish the Celts' reputation as savage, the authors are at least attempting to present it as historical and based on observation. Of course there is no indication that these accounts were known to twelfth-century scholars but, given Gerald of Wales' contemporary accounts of sodomy amongst the Welsh, it is not altogether unlikely that either classical accounts or folk traditions could have preserved some of the material to which

- both Diodorus and Gerald were referring. See Hamish Henderson, “The Women of the Glen: Some Thoughts on Highland History,” in Robert O’Driscoll, ed., *The Celtic Consciousness* (New York: George Braziller, 1981), p. 258.
32. Pierre-Yves Badel is one critic who asserts that in Harley manuscript 978, which contains all twelve *lais*, the stories answer, echo, and correct each other. It is standard medieval practice, according to Badel, that short narratives be seen as part of larger collections and approached that way by readers and listeners. See “La Brièveté comme esthétique et comme éthique dans les *Lais* de Marie de France,” in Jean Dufournet, ed., *Amour et merveille: les lais de Marie de France* (Paris: Champion, 1995), p. 39.
 33. Simon Gaunt provides an excellent discussion of how C. S. Lewis’s idealization is often at the expense of textual readings in his essay on allegory in the *Roman de la rose* (“Bel Accueil”). Many of the Jungian readings of chivalric literature fall into this same trap. See Joseph Campbell, *Myth*, for a very influential example.
 34. I realize that to imply that a twelfth-century text is “conservative” is problematic. While courtly literature can no doubt be seen as transgressive from any number of points of view, I am arguing that its insistence on heterosexual pairing as the culmination of adventure and the implicit investment of female characters in the performance of hypermasculinity, was a force which narrowed considerably the parameters of masculinity. See also Gaunt, “From Epic to Romance.”
 35. Stephen Guy-Bray gave a brilliant and convincing reading of *Eliduc* at Kalamazoo in 2002 that I hope will be published some time soon.
 36. See Nora Cottille-Foley’s fine analysis of feminine empowerment (“The Structuring of Feminine Empowerment: Gender and Triangular Relationships in Marie de France,” in Taylor, ed., *Transgressions*, pp. 153–180) for more on this topic, and Michelle A. Freeman’s “Marie de France’s Poetics of Silence: The Implications for a Feminine *Translatio*,” *PMLA* 99 (1984), pp. 860–883.
 37. In this respect, the endings to the *Lais* are significant. At the close of *Equitan*, she tells us that anyone who wants to contemplate reason or ethics might profitably choose to consider the example of this *Lai* (“Ki bien voldreit raisun entenfre, / ici purreit ensample prendre” [86, 313–315]); *Yonec* and *Milun* were written to remind people of its protagonists’ suffering (“Cil ki ceste aventure oïrent / lunc tens apres un lai en firent / de la peine et de la doloir / que cil sufrirent pur amur” [*Yonec*, 208, 559–562]); *Eliduc* to remind us of things that should never be forgotten (“De l’aventure de cez treis / li ancien Bretun curteis / firent le lai pur remembrer, / qu’um nel deüst pas obliër” [326, 1181–1184]).
 38. S. Foster Damon, in his suggested grouping of the *Lais*, links *Guigemar*, *Bisclavret*, *Lanval*, and *Yonec* under the title of “supernatural.” Though such groupings can be rather arbitrary, and many other such groupings have been suggested, I would concur that these *lais* do stand apart, though not so much for their insistence on the supernatural *per se* as for their protagonists’ abilities to conjure alternate realities. What Damon calls supernatural could also be seen from another perspective as a more conscious rejection of societal norms and expectations on the part of the author. The struggles with identity that mark this grouping quite logically invite

- queer readings. See S. Foster Damon, “Marie de France, Psychologist of Courtly Love,” *PMLA* 44 (1929), pp. 968–996.
39. Gaunt’s influential statement: “I am interested in examining how representations of transgressive sexualities define and produce the limits of heterosexual norms” (“Straight Minds ‘Queer’ Wishes,” p. 441).
40. Sedgwick, *Epistemology*.
41. Tanya Luhmann, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).
42. By urban myth I mean a story which has extraordinary resonance within a community and that is largely taken to be true but whose roots are untraceable and whose veracity can never be established. This untraceability adds to the stature of the story, suggesting that it is something that could have happened to almost anyone; indeed, it is recounted each time as if it had happened not to the storyteller himself but to someone associated with an acquaintance.
43. In this respect, I am in sympathy with Jo Ann McNamara’s analysis of what she calls the *Herrenfrage*, the crisis set off by the application of rules destined to keep women from power in the twelfth century. In her study of the effects of celibacy and all-male spaces, she claims that this institutional move raised the following questions: “Can a man be a man without deploying the most obvious biological attributes of manhood? If a person does not act like a man, is he a man? And what does it mean to ‘act like a man,’ except to dominate women?” (“The *Herrenfrage*,” p. 5). Packs of knights, vying for women’s attention, but left largely to themselves, could be seen as another of these male groupings to which her questions would be applicable.
44. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making*.
45. Emanuel J. Mickel, Jr. claims that many of these supposedly traditional elements actually had their source in the classically inspired *romans d’antiquité* composed at the Plantagenet courts rather than in traditional Celtic mythology. See Mickel’s article, “Antiquities in Marie’s *Lais*,” in Maréchal, ed., *In Quest*, pp. 123–137, and the article by Eve Rosenn (“Sexual and Textual”) in the same volume, pp. 225–242.
46. Marie might have known of classical associations between hunting and queer desires. In Ovid’s tale of Hippolytus (son of Theseus and the Amazon Hippolyte), for example, the young man spurns his step-mother (Phedre) when she expresses her passion. She then denounces him to his father in a scene reminiscent of *Lanval*. In several versions of the myth he is said to have been asexual or anti-sexual, a motif also associated with the female figure of Diana the hunter. See N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
47. SunHee Kim Gertz (“Echoes,” p. 380) sees the lady whom Guigemar will meet rather than the doe/stag (hind) as occupying the position of “other self.” This latter she compares to the roles played by the rejected male suitor and Tiresias in Ovid’s *Narcissus*, i.e., the pretext for the hero’s suffering.
48. Yet, as Matilda Bruckner points out, Guigemar could be read as “the masculine equivalent of the lady and her qualities” (*Shaping Romance: Interpretation*,

Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993], p. 165), thus suggesting that the cutting from the imaginary identification is not in the interest of absolute difference but rather, paradoxically, of the substitution of one (masculine) identification for another, which is feminine. Guigemar could then be seen not as taking on a heterosexual, masculine identity in his pairing with the lady but as accepting a predominantly feminine identity in which he, like the stag, is made up of a self and his feminine double. In the same piece, Bruckner catalogues other examples of these “parallel characterizations” or “twinings” as she called them in a recent paper (Kalamazoo 2002), in the *Lais* (167).

49. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the phallus is the empty signifier which nonetheless structures the patriarchal order. While it is largely taken up by men, males can refuse it and women can gain access to it (Jacques Lacan, *Encore: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972–1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink [New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1999]; originally published as *Séminaire XX: Encore, 1972–1973* [Paris: Seuil, 1975]).
50. “Ne par herbe ne par racine, / ne par mire ne par poisun / n’avras tu ja mes guarisun / de la plaie qu’as en la quisse, / de si que cele te guarisse, / ki suffera pur tue amur / si grant peine e si gant dolur, / qu’unkes femme tant ne sufert; / e tu referas tant pur li . . .” (32, 110–118). (Never by herb or root, medicine or potion will your thigh wound be cured; not until a woman suffers for your love pain and sorrow like no woman has ever suffered before, and you suffer as much for her.)
51. In sacrificial rituals it is essential that no one person can be blamed for the sacrifice. The choice of victim must appear to be directed by fate (e.g., the victim conforms to prophesied signs or is chosen at random) and the killing must seem to be no more the result of one person’s efforts than another’s. This explains why early Greek rituals are said to have involved chasing a victim off a cliff, setting him/her adrift, or abandoning him/her to the elements, situations which will result in death without allowing for blame to be attributed to any one persecutor from whom retribution could be exacted. See René Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1972). The question of the comparative suffering of the lovers has also been debated since the story explicitly states that the woman must suffer like none before her. Gertz (“Echoes,” p. 380) notes that Marie devotes much more space to Guigemar’s suffering, while Joan Brumlik (“Thematic Irony in Marie de France’s *Guigemar*,” *French Forum* 13 [1988], p. 9) sees Guigemar as having suffered less.
52. A straight Lacanian reading might emphasize that Guigemar’s victimization is a metaphor for obligatory entry into the Symbolic order. The youth is induced to cast off imaginary identification with the maternal phallus and his shooting of the hermaphrodite mother is an unconscious rejection of that figure and role. The subsequent disappearance of the fawn from the tale figures the symbolic disappearance of the boy who once aspired to be the phallus for the mother.

53. “Ravi” has the sense both of physical violation and abduction and can be used for both sexes. See Henry A. Kelly, “Meanings and Uses of *Raptus* in Chaucer’s Time,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998), pp. 101–165; Kolve, “Ganymede,” p. 1045; and Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*.
54. Ferrante and Hanning (*Lais*, 45, 534): “I hope they also enjoy whatever else others do on such occasions”; “As for the rest, what other lovers do on such occasions, that’s their business” (Harf Lancner, *Lais*, 53, 534–535).
55. As Althusser (“Ideology,” p. 168) puts it, before getting to the “act,” one must first pass through the ideological apparatuses, then through the ritual practices that shape the beliefs and ideas with which the act is invested or within which it is imbedded. Only then can the act be recognized as an act.
56. “Ceo m’est a vis, an e demi / Guigemar ensemble od li” (52, 535–536).
57. According to Nancy Vine Durling (“Knot,” p. 46), there are four levels of play on the word *plait*: wound, discussion, knot, and love relationship. Furthermore, she relates it to writing. Marie is said to “exploit[s] the possibilities enclosed within the *plait* in order to create a finely woven *lai*” (47). See also R. Howard Bloch’s (“The Medieval Text”) discussion of *Guigemar* and Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, chapter 5.
58. It is interesting to note that male impotence was often seen as a result of witchcraft and knot tying in the Middle Ages. Maleficent female spirits were thought to be able to tie the seminal vessels in knots, invisible to the human eye. Potency only returned when these knots were discovered and repaired or when the witch lifted her spell (Vern L. Bullough, “On Being a Male in the Middle Ages,” in Lees, ed., *Medieval Masculinities*, p. 45; citing H. C. Lea, *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, 3 vols. (New York: S. A. Russell, 1955), pp. 162–170).
59. The *Lai* of *Mélion* offers an interesting twist on this same theme of reluctance to marry. *Mélion* announces that he will only marry a woman who has never loved or spoken of another man (“Ja n’ameroit pucele / que tant seroit gentil ne bele, / que nul autre home eüst amé, / ne que de nul eüst parlé” [19–22]), i.e., it must be a woman who is not part of a male network, who will be incapable of assuring his bond with other men. Though the editor of the *lai*, Alexandre Micha, dismisses this vow as a *gab* (an extravagant boast or challenge, a joke or riddle), he admits that its author was influenced by Marie’s portrait of *Guigemar*, the “orgueilleux” who disdains love, and that *Mélion* displays “une intransigence absolue” (Micha, ed., *Lais*, p. 259). His dismissal strikes me as too easy, never considering that there might be legitimate reasons why the protagonist wishes to abstain from heterosexual pairing. Even if *Mélion*’s stand is an indication of a heterosexual identity, it is the wrong type of heterosexuality, since it does not strengthen homosocial bonds and potentially transgresses systems of exchange.
60. This incident is recounted in Eilhart von Oberg’s *Tristrant* (ed. D. Buschinger and W. Spiewok [Paris: 10/18, 1986], ll. 1381–1418, dated to 1170–1190).
61. See Althusser’s curt summation of free will: “An individual believes in God, or Duty, or Justice, etc. This belief derives (for everyone, i.e. for all those who live in an ideological representation of ideology, which reduces ideology to ideas endowed

by definition with a spiritual existence) from the ideas of the individual concerned, i.e. from him as a subject with a consciousness which contains the ideas of his belief. In this way, i.e. by means of the absolutely ideological 'conceptual' device [*dispositif*] thus set up [a subject endowed with a consciousness in which he freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes], the [material] attitude of the subject concerned naturally follows" ("Ideology," p. 167).

62. A similar scene occurs in another Celtic-inspired *lai*, *Guingamor* (in Micha, ed., *Lais*, p. 63). The young knight is propositioned by the wife of his lord in terms similar to those found in *Lanval*, but the Queen, rather than accuse him of treachery or sodomy, sets up a challenge to find the *sanglier blanc*, knowing full well that no one returns from that impossible quest.
63. This scene, itself derivative of the biblical scene of Potiphar's seduction and accusation of Joseph (Genesis 39. 6–20), seems to have been the source of similar scenes in later texts. See, for example, this passage from *L'Histoire de Gilles de Chyn* (1230–40: La roïne tote en tressaut, / Por .i. pau li cuers ne li faut / De la joie que veü l'a; / Dejouste lui seoir s'en va. / . . . / De s'amour, car n'en a talent; / En autre liu li cuers li tent. / La roïne se couroucha, / Vilainement l'arraisona: / 'Gilles,' fait ele, 'mout me duel / D'une riens que dire vous wel.' / 'De coi, dame?' 'D'une folie / Qui mout voz torne a vilonnie. / Ains ne vosistez dame amer / Puis que venistez deça mer, / Tant fust gente, haute ne basse.' / 'De coi?' fait Gilles, 'me meslasse? / Je ne voi dame ou je peüsse / Mettre m'amor si com deüssé.' / 'Comment, Gilles, que faut en moi?' / 'Nule riens, dame, par ma foy. / Voz estes dame bele et gente, / Mais j'ai ailleurs mise m'entente.' / 'Voire,' fait ele, 'en .i. garchon; / Vos traiés de mauvais archon, / N'a point de fer en vostre flece, / En vous a mout vilaine tece; / N'aiez cure de teil mestier / Car trop em porriez avillier.' / Gilles l'entent, ne li plot mie / Qu'ele le rete d'irezie; / Si li respont en eslepas: / 'Sodomitez ne sui je pas; / Ains ainc bien et si sui amés, / Plus que nus hom me mere né, / De la millor, de la plus bele / Qui soit . . . (ll. 3524–3561)

[The Queen is shaking, her heart is breaking with joy over seeing him; she goes to sit beside him . . . he doesn't want her love; his heart is elsewhere. Now the Queen is angry and she speaks to him in this coarse and dishonorable manner: – "Gilles," she says, "I am very upset about something and I want to talk to you about it." – "About what? my lady?" – "About a crazy rumor I heard that disgraces your name. You have shown no interest in loving any lady, neither noble nor peasant, since you returned from overseas." – "What are you going on about?" says Gilles. "I see no lady I could love the way I really should." – "Oh? And what's wrong with me?" – "Why nothing, my lady, I assure you. You are a beautiful and noble woman, but my heart is elsewhere." – "That's right," she said, "with a boy; you are pulling on an evil bow there, and there's certainly no metal in your arrow. There is an ignoble stain within you [(or: on your reputation). Have nothing more to do with that profession for it could truly ruin you." Gilles hears her but is not pleased that she is calling him a heretic. He answers back, right away: "I am no sodomite; quite the opposite. I love someone and am loved, more than any man born of a mother, by the best and most beautiful woman ever . . .".]

64. Another contemporary Celtic *lai* (*Graelent*) tells a very similar story but forgoes the scene of seduction and accusation of sodomy (Micha, ed., *Lais*, p. 20). Instead, the young knight Graelent prefers to say publicly that the Queen is the most beautiful woman he knows. There ensues a trial and a rescue by his fairy lover, just as in *Lanval*.
65. Raphael Levy ("L'allusion à la sodomie dans *Eneas*," *Philological Quarterly* 27 [1948], pp. 372–76) studied the word "mestier" in relation to the Queen's usage in the homophobic tirade in the *Eneas* romance and found that it often refers to prostitution and in three particular cases to male prostitution and male–male sex acts.
66. Lanval is not, of course, on trial for sodomy, but for having offended the honor of the King and Queen. In fact, there is never any suggestion that the men accused or suspected of sodomy in the texts discussed in this book should be punished by civil or religious authorities (Greenberg, *Construction*, p. 288; Goodich, *Unmentionable*, pp. 43–46), though excommunication, exile from the community, and penance were the recommended punishments, as per the Lateran Council of 1179 (Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 399).
67. Avalon is presumably the *Insula Avallonis* mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. It is the home of Morgan, the place where Arthur's sword was forged and to which he was returned after his fateful wounds in the final battle. It is widely associated in the twelfth century with a sort of afterlife paradise where apples grow in abundance and life is sweet. Later in the century, there are claims that link it with the abbey of Glastonbury (Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* [New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1986], p. 32).
68. See also Sharon Kinoshita's reading of *Lanval* ("'Cherchez la femme': Feminist Criticism and Marie and France's *Lanval*," *Romance Notes* 34, 3 [Spring 1994], pp. 263–273) in which she argues that the truly revolutionary act of Lanval is to reject voluntarily both the orders of feudalism and chivalry. In this way, Marie de France constructs the other world as a space of possible transgression, beyond the symbolic structures which patrol gender at court.
69. Judith Rice Rothschild ("A *Rapprochement* Between *Bisclavret* and *Lanval*," *Speculum* 48, 4 [October 1973], p. 88) emphasizes that Lanval's disappearance at the end of the *lai* actually enacts the two dire consequences predicted if his lover were not to appear: "E s'il ne puet guarant avoir, / ceo li devum faire savoir: / tut sun servise pert del rei, / e sil deit cungeer de sei" (And if he cannot produce a guarantor [alibi, witness, savior] this is what we must make understood: that he will have lost the right to serve the King and that the King will have to banish him [ll. 459–462]). Furthermore, Lanval is as isolated from the court at the end of the *lai* as he was at the beginning; and his boast to the fairy at his first meeting has become a description of his actual state: "Pur vus guerpilai tutes genz" (128). All of this would lead us to conclude that the fairy episode, including the final liberation scene, is a figment of Lanval's own imagination. From the perspective of all others at court, he has lost his trial and been banished, in fulfillment of his own prophecy.

70. See the footnotes to SunHee Kim Gertz's "Transferral, Transformation, and the Act of Reading in Marie de France's *Bisclavret*," *Romance Quarterly* 39, 4 (1992), pp. 408–410, for an excellent survey of different interpretations of *Bisclavret*.
71. Harf-Lancner (*Lais*, p. 119) says: "It will be the end of your love for me and my own loss of self"; Ferrante and Hanning, eds. (*Lais*, p. 93), agree: "I'd lose your love and even my very self."
72. I am thinking of the lost or disguised identities of Guigemar in exile, Tristan in *Chèvrefeuille*, and Muldumarec in the form of the bird; but the same could be said, from another perspective, about Fresne, the fairy lover of Lanval, or Milon and his son as they confront each other in battle.
73. Actually, there was little agreement among theologians over whether man's sexual nature was the result of an operation of natural law or an anomalous, secondary, diabolical intervention into creation. See Caroline W. Bynum ("Metamorphosis, or Gerald and the Werewolf," *Speculum* 73, 4 [October 1998], pp. 987–1013), and James Brundage (*Law, Sex, and Christian Society*) on the *Glossa Ordinaria* and the *Decretum*. Either way, however, it was commonly agreed that man without God would revert to a beast that lives for pleasure alone.
74. The wife has already sexualized his disappearance, suggesting that he spends his away time with someone else he loves ("mun escient que vus amez" [I think you must love (someone else)] [118, 51]).
75. Claude Seignolle, *Contes populaires de Guyenne* (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve, 1946).
76. The *lai* of Tyolet offers an interesting perspective on *Bisclavret*. Tyolet, a naïve and rustic lad of fifteen who recalls the young Perceval in the *Conte du graal*, asks the first knight he meets what his name is. The man responds only that he is a knight. Tyolet then asks what kind of a beast a knight is, where it lives and where it comes from. The knight answers that "a knight is a formidable beast which attacks and devours other beasts. He usually lives in the forest but can sometimes be found on the plains" (E Tyolet a demandé / quel beste chevalier estoit, / ou conversoit e dont venait. / – Par foi, fet il, jel te dirai / . . . / C'est une beste molt cremue, / autres bestes prent et menjue, / el bois converse molt souvent, / e a plainne terre ensement [Micha, ed., *Lais*, pp. 188–190, 137–145]). This definition sounds very much like Marie's definition of *Bisclavret*, thus suggesting that the scourge of the forest described by Marie in her prologue is actually an Arthurian knight. From the conclusion of *Bisclavret*, one might even understand that she is claiming that the taming of a knight is best accomplished through homosocial rather than heterosexual bonds. Tyolet's mother echoes this negative evaluation of knights when she reiterates for her son later in the text: "All you've seen is the kind of beast which captures and eats so many others" (que tu as tel beste veüe / qui mainte autre prent e manjue" [ll. 256–257]).
77. By "aventure" Marie probably means a strange story, or a story in which there is magical or supernatural intervention. Though *Bisclavret* does not follow the pattern of otherworldly travel as the road to heterosexual union, the forest is clearly an arena of magic and transformation.

78. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).
79. The treatment of the Arthurian knight, Kay, offers an interesting answer to this question. The diversity of treatment he receives at the hands of authors following in Chrétien de Troyes's footsteps indicate that how to treat a mocking (as in *Le Chevalier au lion* and *Conte du graal*), not particularly heroic (*Chevalier de la charrette*), unloving and unlovable knight was a real quandary. Kay emerges from the conglomerate of Arthurian tales as the least consistent and most perplexing of the knights of the Round Table.
80. Kinoshita, "Cherchez," p. 272.

5 WRITING THE SELF: ALAIN DE LILLE'S *DE PLANCTU NATURAE*

1. Slavoj Žižek, "Da Capo Senza Fine," in S. Žižek, J. Butler, and E. Laclau, eds., *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), p. 220.
2. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 106.
3. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1992), citing Robert Heinlein, *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag* (Hicksville, NY: Gnome Press, 1959).
4. Žižek, *Looking Awry*, pp. 14–15.
5. Žižek's useful discussion of Hegel's notion of negation can be found in *The Ticklish Subject*, pp. 90–92.
6. All citations from the *De planctu naturae* are from James J. Sheridan's translation, *Plaint of Nature* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980). The Latin text is taken from Nikolaus M. Häring, *De planctu naturae, Studi Medievali* 19, 2 (1978), pp. 797–879. The *De planctu* is still extant in at least 133 manuscripts, though in twenty-two of these it is entitled the *Enchiridion*. From this Häring concludes that it was untitled and anonymous in the first written copies and that it was largely unknown during Alain's lifetime. A portion of this chapter was presented as a paper at the Queer Middle Ages conference, held at the CUNY Graduate Center and New York University in October 1998.
7. "miror, cur quaedam tue tunice portiones, que texture matrimonio deberent esse confines, in ea parte sue coniunctionis paciantur diuorcia, in qua hominis imaginem picture representant insompnia" (Häring, *De planctu*, 838, 161–163).
8. The image is taken from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, in which Philosophy's robe has been ripped by the wrangling of philosophical sects. The citation in Alain reads: "Cum enim, ut prediximus, plerique homines in suam matrem uiciorum armentur iniuriis, inter se et ipsam maximum chaos dissensionis firmantes, in me violentas manus violenter iniciunt et mea sibi particulatim uestimenta diripiunt et, quam reuerentie deberent honore uestire, me uestibus orphanatam, quantum in ipsis est, cogunt meretricialiter lupanare. Hoc ergo integumentum hac scissura

- depingitur, quod solius hominis iniuriosis insultibus, mea pudoris ornamenta discidii scissionis contumelias paciuntur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 838, 165–172).
9. “Cum Venus in Venerem pugnans illos facit illas / Cumque sui magica deuirat arte viros” (Häring, *De planctu*, 806, 5–6).
 10. Three recent pieces offer the most convincing and thorough readings I have seen. Mark Jordan’s *Invention of Sodomy* dedicates a very fine chapter to *De planctu*. Larry Scanlon’s “Unspeakable” article provides an astute and wide-ranging survey of a number of issues raised by Alain’s text, and Susan Schibanoff’s admirable take on Alain is one that I clearly endorse (“Sodomy’s Mark: Alan of Lille, Jean de Meun, and the Medieval Theory of Authorship,” in Burger and Kruger, eds., *Queering*, pp. 28–56). Jan Ziolkowski’s work on Alain and grammar is indispensable (*Alan of Lille’s Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual* [Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1985]), as is Elizabeth Pittenger’s elegant and original essay “Explicit Ink,” in Fradenburg and Freccero, eds., *Premodern*, pp. 223–242. See also the discussions in Boswell, *Christianity*; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Dante’s Sexual Solecisms: Gender and Genre in the *Commedia*,” in Brownlee, Brownlee, and Nichols, eds., *New Medievalism*, pp. 201–225; Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) and *idem* “Some Implications of Nature’s Femininity in Medieval Poetry,” in Lawrence D. Roberts, ed., *Approaches to Nature in the Middle Ages* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), pp. 47–62; Gillian R. Evans, *Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Maureen Quilligan, “Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Deallegorization of Language: The *Roman de la Rose*, the *De planctu Naturae*, and the *Parlement of Foules*,” in M. Bloomfield, ed., *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 163–186.
 11. Alain elsewhere defines dreams according to a tripartite schema corresponding to epistemological, ontological, and moral models. It is interesting to note that the dreamer’s dream in the *De planctu* corresponds to none of these categories but rather merges the theological, imaginative, and base elements into one semi-coherent whole. This would clearly suggest that the text was not meant to be read as the illustration of a prior theory or as a prescriptive treatise alone (Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], p. 80).
 12. Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p. 18.
 13. See Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (Madison Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
 14. In this Alain’s text shows the clear influence of the School of Chartres with its mirrored surfaces and insistence upon Nature as the link between God and man, the sublunary and celestial.
 15. “Nunc mea tela jacent, quibus olim victus Achilles / Cessit, degeneri mentitus veste puellam. / Inque colum clavam vertens, in pensa sagittas, / In fustum pharetras, Alcides degener armis, / Totus femineos male degeneravit in actus. / Haec ait, et

- vitam pariter cum voce reliquit.” (*Anticlaudianus sive De officio viri boni et perfecti*, PL 210, cols. 481–576, ed. J. P. Migne (Turnholt: Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1855, 1976), 412: col. 571.
16. Both Jordan (*Invention of Sodomy*, p. 75) and Sheridan (*Plaint*, p. 130 n.1) note how the narrator pushes Nature to make her answer difficult questions.
17. It has been suggested that the *De planctu* was written, probably on commission, as a pointed attack on the morals of the Archbishop of York, Roger de Pont-L'Évêque, an avowed enemy of Thomas Becket. See Robert Bossuat, Louis Pichard, and Guy Raynaud de Lage, eds., *Le Moyen Age*, rev. Geneviève Hasenohr and Michel Zink (Paris: Fayard, 1964, 1994), p. 33.
18. Ziolkowski surveys other uses of grammatical metaphors in the twelfth century and finds that Alain was not the first, or the only, author to have found grammatical theory and terminology a convenient source of metaphor. Ziolkowski finds him unusual only in the insistence with which he pursued his task and the range and complication of the metaphors he used to expose sexual misconduct. Alain apparently had many models to follow and several contemporaries with whom he could have compared notes, including the classical authors Martial and Juvenal and his contemporaries Gautier de Coincy, Matthew of Vendôme, and Walter of Châtillon, all of whom exploited similar metaphors of improper joining, though none to the same degree. See Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, pp. 56–68.
19. The *De planctu* is in the form of a Menippean satire, a serio-comic examination of a philosophical topic in which prose and verse sections alternate. Alain was familiar with this classical form from his study of Martianus Capella, Boethius, and Peter of Compostella (Sheridan, *Plaint*, p. 35). The appearance of Lady Nature is, as we have seen, a clear sign of the influence of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, but Alain also strays from that model in significant ways.
20. See Rollo, “Gerald of Wales,” pp. 178–179 n.25 for an excellent short discussion of Alain’s excesses and his possible influence on Gerald of Wales. Rollo cites the following passage as an example of Alain’s “sequential antithesis, terminal repetition, cognate modulation of the *paronomeon*, and ubiquitous recourse to metaphor for the expression of any substantive” (emphasis added): Cum enim iam Epicuri *soporentur insomnia*, Manichei *sanetur insania*, Aristotilis *arguantur argutie*, Arrii *fallantur fallatie*, *unicam* dei *unitatem* ratio probat, mundus eloquitur, fides credit, Scriptura testatur. In quem nulla labes *inuehitur*, quem nulla uicii pestis *aggreditur*, cum quo nullus temptationis motus *congregitur*. Hic est splendor nunquam *deficiens*, uita indefesse non *moriens*, fons semper *scaturiens*, *seminale* uite *seminarium*, sapientie *principale principium*, *initiale* bonitatis *initium* (citing Häring, *De planctu*, 837–838, 143–149).
21. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 142.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
23. The format does suggest, however, that it could have been used as an instruction manual on the art of pedagogy. The dialectical interplay between teacher and student within the text reflects how this type of question/answer instruction should work. The intended audience, on the other hand, is never clear. One can never be

sure whether Alain's narrator is talking to himself, addressing a student, a particular individual, or a community.

24. See Michael Camille's *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992) for discussion of examples in manuscripts and sculpture, and Claude Gaignebet and J. Dominique Lajoux, *Art profane et religion populaire au moyen âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985) for more on transgressive border imagery in medieval churches.
25. Derrida emphasizes a similar reading practice in *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey and Richard Rand (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1987; originally published Paris: Galilée, 1974). Duane Michals has spent his career exploring the interplay between photographic image and written commentary. See, for example, his *Homage to Cavafy* (Danbury, NH: Addison House, 1978) or the *The Essential Duane Michals* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997). Michel Butor traces such practices throughout Western art in *Les mots et la peinture* (Geneva: Skira, 1981).
26. Andrew Cowell ("The Dye of Desire: The Colors of Rhetoric in the Middle Ages," *Exemplaria* 11, 1 [1999], p. 131) argues convincingly that this is because Alain, while claiming to subscribe to ideas espoused by Matthew of Vendôme (that words must always be the marks of meanings or senses which are prior to them) is actually veering closer to Geoffrey of Vinsauf's position, which insists "on the ways in which texts can play with or hide such meanings, expressing them in multiple fashions whose own multiplicity is more important than the meaning per se." That Alain was writing before either of these theoreticians of rhetoric problematizes the dichotomy but lends weight to the argument that the *De planctu* is an anomalous and extraordinary composition, regardless of whatever meaning we ascribe to it.
27. Ziolkowski suggests such a progression from disorder to order:

Alan's subtle symbolic interpretation of dactyls shapes the whole structure of the *De planctu naturae*. In the course of the work, there is a steady movement from elegiac couplets to dactylic hexameters. This progression could be viewed as one from dactyls in disorder to dactyls in order, since the second line of an elegiac couplet incorporates fragmented dactyls. The shift from the one meter to the other corresponds to the gradual restoration of the natural order, as exemplified by the dreamer's increasing awareness and the approach of Genius's judgment. Elegiacs alternate regularly with other meters in the first half of the *De planctu* and suit the material covered there, since one elegiac section deals with the dreamer's sentiments about sexual perversion, another with the beauties of spring, and the third with the nature of Cupid. (*Alan of Lille*, p. 26)

28. "Que non ex pruritu Affrodites promiscuo propagata, sed hoc solo Nature natiq̃ue geniali osculo fuerat deriuata" (Häring, *De planctu*, 877, 94–97).
29. "Que uirgineo corpori tanta fuerant conexione iugate, ut nulla exuitionis dieresis eas aliquando a uirginali corpore faceret phariseas" (Häring, *De planctu*, 877, 101–102).
30. "Alie uero, tanquam aduenticie nature precedentibus appendices, nunc oculis uisus offerebant libamina, nunc oculorum sese frabantur indagini" (Häring, *De planctu*, 877, 103–104).

31. “An ignoras, quomodo poete sine omni palliationis remedio, auditoribus nudam falsitatem prostituunt, ut quadam mellite delectationis dulcedine uelut incantatas audientium aures inebrient? Aut ipsam falsitatem quadam probabilitatis ypocrisi palliant, ut per exemplorum imagines hominum animos inhoneste morigenerationis incude sigillent? Aut, in superficiali littere cortice falsum resonat lira poetica, interius uero auditoribus secretum intelligentie altioris eloquitur, ut exteriori falsitatis abiecto putamine dulciorem nucleum ueritatis secrete intus lector inueniat” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 128–136).
32. “Huius igitur imaginarie uisionis subtracto speculo, me ab exstasis excitatum insomnio prior mistice apparitionis dereliquit aspectus” (Häring, *De planctu*, 879, 164–165).
33. Andrew Cowell (“Dye,” p. 130) again attributes this confusion between substance and adornment to a refusal of the idea of a “‘natural,’ literal, linguistic body which bears the essential meaning of the text prior to a ‘figuration’ which rhetoric may impose upon it. . . . Rhetoric and the body are inseparable, and it is at this point of inseparability where meaning is produced, rather than along any path to the allegorical.”
34. Marriage was only gradually added to the official roster of sacraments over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but the narrator of the *De planctu*, and perhaps Alain as well, is already pushing for marriage as a sacred institution in 1160.
 “In quibus picturarum fabule nuptiales sompniabant euentus, picturatas tamen ymagines uetustatis fuligo fere coegerat expirare. Ibi tamen sacramentalem matrimonii fidem, connubii pacificam unitatem, nuptiarum indisparabile iugum, nubentium indissolubile uinculum, lingua picture fatebatur intextum. In picture etenim libro umbratilitate legebatur, que nuptiarum iniciis exultationis applaudat sollempnitas, que in nuptiis melodie sollempnizet suauitas, que connubiis conuiuiarum arrideat generalitas specialis, que matrimonia Cithereae concludat iocunditas generalis” (Häring, *De planctu*, 866, 25–33).
35. “An interrogationem, que nec dubitationis faciem digna est usurpare, quaestionis querendo uestis imagine?” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 124–125); “ista nube taciturnitatis obdixi, illa uero in lucem uere narrationis explicui” (838, 153–154).
36. “Sed postquam uniuersalis artifex uniuersa suarum naturarum uultibus inuestiuit, omniaque sibi inuicem legitimis proportionum connubiis maritauit” (Häring, *De planctu*, 840, 217–219).
37. “in qua stili obsequentis subsidio imagines rerum ab umbra picture ad ueritatem sue essentie transmigrantes, uita sui generis munerabat” (Häring, *De planctu*, 876, 71–72).
38. “In quibus imaginaria picture probabilitas sophistico picturationis sue prestigio homines notorio auaricie crimine laborantes . . .” (Häring, *De planctu*, 869, 125–126); “Ibi fabulosis picture commentis legebatur inscriptum” (870, 147–148).
39. “Illic aries, tunica nobiliori trabeatus, uxorum pluralitate gauisus, matrimonii defraudabat honorem” (Häring, *De planctu*, 818, 265–267).

40. “Has animalium figuras, hystrionalis figure representatio, quasi iocunditatis conuiuia, oculis donabat uidentium” (Häring, *De planctu*, 819, 279–280).
41. “Illic noctua tante deformitatis sterquilinio sordescibat, ut in eius formatione Naturam fuisse crederes sompnolentam” (Häring, *De planctu*, 815, 168–169).
42. “Hec picture tropo eleganter in pallio figurata sculpture natate uidebantur miraculo” (Häring, *De planctu*, 817, 228–229).
43. “Lapis primus lumine noctem, frigus incendio pati iubebat exilium. In quo, ut faceta picture loquebantur mendacia, leonis effigiata fulminabat effigies” (Häring, *De planctu*, 810, 56–58).
44. “quorum primus, sudoris guttulis lacrimas exemplando, quodam imaginario fletu contristabat aspectum”; “in quo, ex caprinae lanae adulterino uellere, capricorno tunicam pictura texuerat”; “rosam visibus presentabat”; “In qua sub imaginario flumine pisces sue nature nando exercitium frequentabant” (Häring, *De planctu*, 811, 68–69, 72–73, 79, 83–84). Jordan (*Invention*) notes other anomalous features of the images on the dress in the course of his discussion (70–71).
45. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 18.
46. “in me uiolentas manus uiolenter iniciunt et mea sibi particularim uestimenta diripiunt et, quam reuerentie deberent honore uestire, me uestibus orphanatam, quantum in ipsis est, cogunt meretricaliter lupanare” (Häring, *De planctu*, 838, 167–170).
47. Jordan, *Invention*, p. 68.
48. Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes* (Paris: Seuil, 1970).
49. “Sicut autem quasdam gramatice dialecticeque obseruantias inimicantissime hostilitatis incursus uolui a Veneris anathematizare gignasiis; sic methonomicas rethorum positiones, quas in sue amplitudinis gremio rethorica mater amplectens, multis suas orationes afflat honoribus, Cypridis artificii interdixi, ne si nimis dure translationis excursu a suo reclamante subiecto predicatum alienet in aliud, in facinus facetia, in rusticitatem urbanitas, tropus in uicium, in decolorationem color nimius conuertatur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 848, 108–114).
50. “nolo ut prius plana uerborum planicie explanare proposita uel prophanis uerborum nouitatibus prophanare prophana, uerum pudenda aureis pudicorum uerborum faleris inaurare uariisque uenustorum dictorum coloribus inuestire” (Häring, *De planctu*, 839, 183–186).
51. “Consequens enim est predictorum uiciorum scorias deauratis lectionibus purpurare, uiciorumque fetorem odore uerborum imbalsamare mellifluo, ne si tanti sterquilinii fetor in nimie promulgationis aures euaderet, plerosque ad indignationis nauseantis uomitum inuitaret” (Häring, *De planctu*, 839, 186–190).
52. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 17.
53. See, for example, this citation, in which Nature blames antiphrasis for making two (monk and adulterer) into one, yet uses antiphrasis herself, calling a “miracle” what she actually sees as an act of treachery and vice:

“Nonne per antifrasm miracula multa Cupido / Efficiens, hominum protheat omne genus? / Cum sint opposita monachus mechorum eidem / Hec duo subiecto cogit inesse simul.” (Häring, *De planctu*, 842–843, 21–24)

- [Does not Cupid (Desire), performing many miracles, to use antiphrasis, change the shapes of mankind? Though monk and adulterer are opposite terms, he forces both of these to exist together in the same subject.] Translation cited in Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 34. See Epp (“Learning to Write With Venus’s Pen: Sexual Regulation in Matthew of Vendôme’s *Ars versificatoria*,” in Murray and Eisenbichler, eds., *Desiring*, p. 270) for similar tactics in Matthew of Vendôme’s 1175 treatise, *Ars versificatoria*.
54. Though natural law arguments were already in use before Alain, Thomas Aquinas would solidify them in the *Summa theologiae* one hundred years later. There he ranks sexual behavior according to its distance from a natural model, finding that masturbation (“uncleanness”) is the least offensive deed for “it consists only in not having intercourse with another person.” Bestiality is the worst, preceded by sodomy, “since it does not involve the right sex” and then that of “not using the right method of intercourse – which is worse if it is not in the right place than if it relates to other aspects of the method of intercourse” (Ques. 154.12 in Sigmund, *St. Thomas*, p. 80).
 55. “Cum enim, attestante gramatica, duo genera specialiter, masculinum uidelicet et femininum, ratio nature cognouerit, quamuis et quidam homines, sexus depauperati signaculo, iuxta meam oppinionem, possint neutri generis designatione censeri . . .” (Häring, *De planctu*, 846, 43–46).
 56. Sheridan, *Plaint*, p. 158; Häring, *De planctu*, 846–847.
 57. Sheridan, *Plaint*, p. 41.
 58. “ex similibus similia ducerentur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 840, 223). The Latin rhetorical and poetic theory studied by Alain was, no doubt, resolutely prescriptive and normative; “all speech acts were defined as embedded in a ‘natural’ ontological and social hierarchy” (Schnapp, “Dante’s,” p. 202). This idea is still with us. See Angus Gordon, “Turning Back: Adolescence, Narrative, and Queer Theory,” *GLQ* 5, 1 (1999), pp. 1–24, in which he discusses similarly grammar-based arguments on the naturalness of grammar and its usefulness as a metaphor of sexual order, citing Nietzsche, Derrida, and Butler as authorities.
 59. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 68.
 60. Boswell thinks that this song preceded the *De planctu* and that Alain is responding to some of its arguments (*Christianity*, p. 259 n.60). Ziolkowski (*Alan of Lille*, p. 36) notes that most critics see it the other way around: that it is Alain’s text that inspired the Ganymede and many others. Peter Dronke, ed., *Cosmographia* ([Leiden: Brill, 1978], pp. 11–12), noting that Alain’s *Vix nosodum* stages a similar debate in which the value of girls over married women is defended, and that it was composed in the same strophic form as the *Ganymede* and *Helen*, speculated that Alain might actually have been the author of both, certainly an intriguing possibility.
 61. Text is from Etienne de Barbazan and D. M. Méon, eds., *Fabliaux et contes des poètes français des XI, XII, XIII, XIV, et Xme siècles, tirés des meilleurs auteurs*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1808; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1976), I, 310. It is cited in Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 259 n.60. Translation is from Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 35.

62. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 68. Alain's *Anticlaudianus* is a response to Walter of Châtillon's Latin epic, the *Alexandreid*, dated to 1181. Walter's text reads: "Res specie similes in sexu dispare jungit; / Articulos genere sexus paritate coequat / Sintasis, ex toto cupiens concinna videri . . ." (Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 259 n.60).
63. "sic quatuor complexionum compar disparitas, inaequalis aequalitas, deformis conformitas, diuersa idemptitas, edificium corporis humani compaginat" (Häring, *De planctu*, 826, 48–49).
64. "Et sicut contra ratam firmamenti uolutionem, motu contradictorio exercitus militat planetarum, sic in homine sensualitatis rationisque continua reperitur hostilitas" (Häring, *De planctu*, 826, 52–54).
65. "Sed ab huius uniuersalitatis regula solus homo anomala exceptione seducitur, qui pudoris trabea denudatus, impudicitieque meretricali prostibulo prostitutus, in sue domine maiestatem litis audet excitare tumultum, uerum etiam in matrem intestini belli rabiem inflammare" (Häring, *De planctu*, 833, 12–16).
66. Wetherbee, *Poetry*, pp. 49–50, and "Implications," p. 50.
67. Wetherbee, "Implications," p. 50. See, for instance, in Marie de France's *Lanval*, how the spurned Queen brings her complaint to the King and similar scenes in the *Roman de Silence* and *Gilles de Chyn*.
68. Wetherbee, "Implications," p. 51.
69. Bernardus Silvestris, *Cosmographia*, trans. and intro. Winthrop Wetherbee (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 108.
70. When Alain re-creates a similar journey in his *Anticlaudianus* (*Anticlaudianus or The Good and Perfect Man*, trans. and commentary James J. Sheridan [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973], p. 132) he drops any discussion of the sexuality of Mercury or the products of his planet while retaining the description of how Venus and Mercury are bound to one another (105). In his version, Mercury and Venus have been heterosexualized: they "cling in close embrace" and the song of one responds to the song of the other.
71. "(16) Intrans igitur, neque enim fas erat diuertere Mercurii Venerisque circulos, ad se invicem et ad Solem perplexius intricatos. Et nisi commissuras nodosque intersectionum Urania intentior deprehendisset, viarum ambagibus ad Solem, unde venerant, ferebantur. (17) De contiguo proximoque Mercurius, solaris orbite circumcursor, ab eadem quam prevenit prevenitur, et, pro lege circuli reportantis, nunc supra Solem promovet, nunc inferior delitescit. Communis ambiguusque, Cillenius in rebus quas siderea qualitate convertit venientem de moribus malitiam non ostendit, sed sodalis eum societas vel iustificat vel corrumpit: fervori Martio vel Iovis indulgentie copulatus, de proprietate participis suam constituit actionem. Epichenon – sexusque promiscui in comuni – signoque bicorpore ermofroditos facere consuevit. Huic igitur deo virga levis in manibus, pes alatus, expeditus accinctus, quippe qui deorum interpretis legatique numeribus fungebatur" (Dronke, ed., *Cosmographia*, 131: V, 16–17).
72. Theories of sexual difference in the Middle Ages characterized males as hot and dry, while moistness and cold are associated with the female. It is the heat of the male body that accounts for the production of sperm from nutriment. That Venus can

- combine both qualities is already a sign of gender imbalance or excessive passion. See Cadden, *Sex Difference*, pp. 170–171.
73. “Cum Venus in Venerem pugnans, illos facit illas: / Cumque suos magica deuirat arte uiros” (Häring, *De planctu*, 806, 5–6).
 74. Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille*, p. 68.
 75. “ut mee actionis manum dextera supreme auctoritatis dirigeret, quia mee scripture calamus exorbitatione subita deuiaret, nisi supremi Dispensatoris digito regeretur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 840, 233–234).
 76. “In lateritiis vero tabulis arundinei styli ministerio uirgo uarias rerum picturaliter sociabat imagines. Pictura tamen, subjacenti materiae familiariter non cohaerens, uelociter euanescendo moriens, nulla imaginum post se relinquebat vestigia”; “Tunc illa cedula papiream huius epistolaris carminis inscriptione arundinis interuentu signauit” (Häring, *De planctu*: 821, 3–5; 871, 184–186).
 77. “ne ab incudibus malleos aliqua exorbitatione peregrinare permetteret” (Häring, *De planctu*, 845, 29–30).
 78. “Incudam etiam nobiles officinas ejusdem artificio deputauit precipiens, ut eisdem eosdem malleos adaptando rerum effigiationi fideliter indulgeret, ne ab incudibus malleos aliqua exorbitatione peregrinare permetteret. Ad officium etiam scripturae calamum prepotentem eidem fueram elargita, ut in competentibus cedulis ejusdem calami scripturam poscentibus quarum mee largitionis beneficium fuerat conposita iuxta mee orthographie normulam rerum genera figuraret, ne a proprie descriptionis semita in falsigraphie deuia eundem deuagari minime sustineret” (Häring, *De planctu*, 845, 27–34). See Elizabeth Pittenger’s brilliant, gendered reading of Alain’s writing practices in “Explicit Ink.”
 79. “Multi etiam alii iuuenes mei gratia pulchritudinis honore uestiti, debriati pecunie, suos Veneris malleos in incudum transtulerunt officia. Talis monstruosorum hominum . . . ; “Hic nimis est logicus per quem conuersio simplex / Artis, nature iura perire facit. / Cudit in incude, que semina nulla monetat / Horret et incudem malleus ipse suam” (Häring, *De planctu*, 835, 78–81; 807, 25–28).
 80. “cum Antigenio cepit concubinarie fornicari suique adulterii suggestionibus irretita letiferis liberale opus in mechanicum, regulare in anomalum, ciuile in rusticum inciuliter inmutauit meumque disciplinare inficiata preceptum, malleos ab incudum enheredans consortio adulterinis dampnauit incudibus” (Häring, *De planctu*, 849, 132–136).
 81. Alain is more properly talking about the clerical milieu in general. He did not join the Cistercians until late in life so an early work like the *De planctu* was probably written for other clerics and reflects clerical as well as monastic interests.
 82. G. Raynaud de Lage, *Alain de Lille: poète du XIIe siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951), pp. 182–184. Sheridan notes that all commentators from 1220 to 1270 mention the *Anticlaudianus* while none mentions the *De planctu*. This would seem to invalidate Ziolkowski’s speculation that the text might have been written for, and used in, classroom instruction.
 83. See Larry Scanlon’s discussion of euphemism and Alain’s association of the term “nefandum” with homoeroticism: “To render something unspeakable is not only to

speak of it but to give it a paradoxical prominence, and Alain not only acknowledges this paradox but revels in it” (“Unspeakable,” pp. 218–219).

84. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, p. 165.
85. “Non igitur mireris si in has uerborum prophanas exeo nouitates, cum prophani homines prophanius audeant debachari. Talia enim indignanter eructuo, ut pudici homines pudoris caracterem uereantur, impudici uero ab inpudentie lupanaribus commerciis arceantur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 836, 94–98).
86. “Quam postquam michi cognatam loci proximitate prospexi, in faciem decidens, mentem stupore uulneratus exiui totusque in extasis alienatione sepultus sensuumque incarcerationis uirtutibus nec uiuens nec mortuus inter utrumque neuter laborabam. Quem uirgo amicabilem erigens, pedes ebrios sustentantium manuum confortabat solatio meque suis innectendo complexibus meique ora pudicis osculis dulcorando mellifluoque sermonis medicamine a stuporis morbo curauit infirmum” (Häring, *De planctu*, 824–825, 4–10).
87. Though this opening is clearly an homage to Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, Alain’s Nature actually offers little consolation. Instead, she uses her appearance as an opportunity to vent her own rage and frustration.
88. “Et per hanc ammonitionem uelut quodam potionis remedio omnes fantasie reliquias quasi nauseans stomachus mentis euomit” (Häring, *De planctu*, 830, 172–174).
89. “Sed potius eius apparentia uelut monstruosi fantasmatis anomala apparitione percussus, adulterina extasis morte fueram soporatus . . .” (Häring, *De planctu*, 830, 183–184). Note once again the association of Nature with the monstrous, an association that accompanies the mention of sodomy in almost all of the texts discussed in this book.
90. Wetherbee suggests that allegories of Nature from the period always conflate two genders within the same figure: “a feminine appeal for recognition, vindication or fulfillment is set in confrontation with a masculine ratio, a principle or faculty responsible for realizing the implications of this appeal through order” (“Implications,” p. 47).
91. “Huius in facie nulla femineae molliciei resultabant uestigia sed sola uiriliter dignitatis regnabat auctoritas” (Häring, *De planctu*, 865, 10–11).
92. “in femineam degenerare uideretur molliciem” (Häring, *De planctu*, 865, 15–16).
93. As Mark Jordan (*Invention of Sodomy*, p. 169) notes: “It is difficult to find a single condemnation in the theological tradition that does not rely on misogynistic logic. They condemn violently anything feminine, but especially anything that seems to surrender masculine privilege.”
94. “Quid tuti superest, cum dolus armat / Ipsas in propria uiscera matres? . . . Esse pudicum / Iam cunctis pudor est absque pudore / Humanos hominis exuit usus / Non humanus homo. Degener ergo / Bruti degeneres induit actus / Se sic exhominans exhominandus” (Häring, *De planctu*, 852, 37–48).
95. “Que ab orthographie semita falsigraphie claudicatione recedens, rerum figuras immo figurarum laruas umbratiles, semiplena picturatione creabat” (Häring, *De planctu*, 876, 84–85). Paris is the Trojan hero whose lust led to the Trojan war.

Sinon brought the wooden horse into Troy, and Ennius and Pacuvius are poets who suffered from a lack of discipline.

96. “Cur decore deifico uultum deificaui Tindaridis, que pulcritudinis usum in meretricationis abusum abire coegit, dum regalis thori fedus defederans, fede se Paridi federauit?” (Häring, *De planctu*, 835, 68–70).
97. “Veneris tirones inuitabant ad oscula” (Häring, *De planctu*, 809, 21); “Vt ipse tamen uultus loquebatur, non Dionea clauis eius sigillum reserauerat castitatis” (809, 34–35).
98. “ne maritus, sue coniugis turpitudine fastiditus, eius refutaret coniugia” (Häring, *De planctu*, 825, 31–32).
99. Sheridan (*Plaint*, pp. 169–170 n.1) summarizes Nature’s thinking: “To sum up, gluttony is the daughter of idolatry; it leads to lust and is contrary to Nature.”
100. The gendered active/passive dichotomy is inherited from classical antiquity but it received new impetus in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, who declares in the *Summa Theologica*: “In every kind of reproduction there is an active and a passive principle. Since in all things in which there is a difference between the sexes, the active principle is in the male and the passive in the female, the order of nature demands that the male and female reproduce by sexual intercourse” (Question 98.2 in Sigmund, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 40).
101. Using different terms, Trevor Hope (“Sexual Indifference and the Homosexual Male Imaginary,” *diacritics* 24, 2–3 [Summer/Fall 1994], p. 172) criticizes psychoanalytic and anthropological theories (Freud, *The Origins of Religion*; Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985]) which posit an occluded homosexuality as the origin of the symbolic, the base myth of patriarchal culture. In such theories, the founding of patriarchal culture “is troubled by evocations of passivity, loss, masochism, melancholia, and submission to judgment.” The *De planctu naturae* could be seen as an antecedent to such psychoanalytically informed theories of culture in that Alain, too, suggests that there is a homoerotic element inherent in human creation (symbolized here by language itself, grammar, and art) which must be overcome before the subject can attain agency.
102. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, p. 163.
103. “Que michi pressa semel mellirent oscula succo, / Que mellita darent mellis in ore fauum. / Spiritus exiret ad basia, deditus ori / Totus et in labiis luderet ipse sibi, / Vt dum sic moriar, in me defunctus, in illa / Felici uita perfruar alter ego” (Häring, *De planctu*, 807–808, 45–50).
104. It is not surprising that the kiss signals a moment of semiotic meltdown. What Glenn Burger pinpoints in the Pardoner’s kiss (*Canterbury Tales*) could be said as well of the *De planctu*: “If the Pardoner dangerously inverts ruling binaries, the kiss makes his otherness proximate and thus brings to consciousness our implication in the politics of inversion and perversion” (“Kissing,” p. 1152). See also Dinshaw on another pivotal kiss (“Kiss”).
105. “Qui a regula Veneris exceptionem facit anomalam, Veneris priuetur sigillo” (Häring, *De planctu*, 878, 150–151).

106. “Sed quoniam ex matre sacietatis idemptitate fastiditus animus indignatur, cotidianique laboris ingruentia exsequendi propositum appetitus extinguitur, unitas operis tociens repetita Cytheream infestauit fastidiis continueque laborationis effectus, laborandi seclisit affectum” (Häring, *De planctu*, 848, 120–124).
107. “Predicta igitur theatralis oratio, ioculatoriis euagata lasciuiis, tue puerilitati pro ferculo propinatur. Nunc stilus, paululum ad pueriles tue infantie fescenninas digressus, ad seriale prefinite narrationis propositum reuertatur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 845, 17–20).
108. This is what might be called the traditional view but no recent critic has maintained this stand without many qualifications.
109. See n. 17 to this chapter.
110. Most readers acknowledge that this is true to some degree. Jordan (*Invention of Sodomy*, pp. 98–99), for example, notes the presence of jokes and mutations throughout the text, despite the condemnation of Jocus as a character (bastard offspring of Venus and Antigenius, the final blow against traditional marriage).
111. This is a simplification of Jordan’s (*Invention of Sodomy*) finely argued thesis.
112. Scanlon, “Unspeakable,” p. 226.
113. *Ibid.*
114. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
115. In this regard, see David Rollo (“Gerald of Wales,” p. 180) on Gerald of Wales’ derivative (from Alain) stylistic maneuvers in his *Topographia Hibernica*. Concerning the referential integrity of that text, a text which in a similarly extravagant style accuses the Irish of perverse sexual practices and hermaphroditism: “the relevant chapters of the *Topographia* would be consistent with the *De planctu*, a particularly new and venerable sexuality emerging as the signified corollary of an equally new and venerable writing.”
116. Žižek, *Plague*, p. 7.
117. According to Žižek: “Fantasy is an attempt to fill out this lack of the Other, not of the subject: to (re)constitute the consistency of the big Other. For that reason, fantasy and paranoia are inextricably linked; at its most elementary, paranoia is a belief in an ‘Other of the Other,’ in another Other who, hidden behind the Other of the explicit social textures, programmes (what appears to us as) the unforeseen effects of social life, and thus guarantees its consistency . . .” (Žižek, “Da Capo,” p. 253)
118. Žižek, *Plague*, p. 7.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
120. “Quidam uero, quasi etheroclitici genere, per hyemem in feminino, per estatem in masculino genere, irregulariter declinantur. Sunt qui, in Veneris logica disputantes, in conclusionibus suis subiectionis predicationisque legem relatione mutua sorciuntur. Sunt qui, uicem gerentes suppositi, predicari non norunt” (Häring, *De planctu*, 835, 85–89).
121. “Miror cur poetarum commenta retractans, solummodo in humani generis pestes predictarum inuECTIONUM armas aculeos, cum et eodem exorbitationis pede deos claudicasse legamus. Iupiter enim, adolescentem Frigium transferens ad superna,

- relatiuam Venerem transtulit in translatum . . . Bachus etiam et Apollo, paterne coheredes lasciuie, non diuine uirtutis imperio sed supersticiose Veneris prestigio, uerterunt in feminas pueros inuertendo” (Häring, *De planctu*, 836–837, 115–122).
122. “Nec in hoc poeta a suae proprietatis genere degener inuenitur” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 141–142).
123. “An interrogationem, que nec dubitationis faciem digna est usurpare, questionis querendo uestis imagine, an umbratilibus poetarum figmentis, que artis poetice depinxit industria, fidem adhibere conaris?” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 124–126).
124. “Aut in superficiali littere cortice falsum resonat lira poetica, interius uero auditoribus secretum intelligentie altioris eloquitur, ut exteriori falsitatis abiecto putamine dulciorem nucleum ueritatis secrete intus lector inueniat” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 133–136).
125. See n. 14 to this chapter (Häring, *De planctu*, 837–838, 143–145). But, as Jeffrey Schnapp points out: “sexual solecism . . . becomes the privileged site of the sacred body” (“Dante’s,” p. 205). “The incarnation is the solecism to beat all other solecisms, an exercise in poetic license so inordinate and striking that only one truly possessed with authorial authority, such as God, could get away with it” (*Ibid.*, p. 206).
126. “Poete tamen aliquando hystoricales euentus ioculationibus fabulosis quadam eleganti sutura confederant, ut ex diuersorum competenti iunctura ipsius narrationis elegantior pictura resultet” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 137–139).
127. “Sed tamen, cum a poetis deorum pluralitas sompniatur uel ipsi dii Venereis ferulis manus subduxisse dicuntur, in hiis falsitatis umbra lucescit” (Häring, *De planctu*, 837, 139–142).
128. “tanquam mundi elegans architectus, tanquam auree fabrice faber aurarius, uelut stupendi artificii artifex artificiosus artifex, uelut admirandi operis opifex . . .” (Häring, *De planctu*, 839, 202–203).
129. “Hee sunt ueris opes et sua pallia, / Telluris species et sua sidera / Que pictura suis artibus edidit, / Flores effigians arte sophistica” (Häring, *De planctu*, 820, 21–24).
130. “Sed pocius se gramaticis constructionibus destruens, dialecticis conuersionibus destruens, dialecticis conuersonibus inuertens, rethoricis coloribus decolorans, suam artem in figuram, figuram in vitium transferebat . . .” (Häring, *De planctu*, 849, 142–144).
131. The more familiar Neoplatonic use of mirror imagery surfaces in the description of Truth: “the offspring of the generative kiss of Nature with her son at the time when the eternal idea greeted Hyle as he begged for the mirror of forms” (217–218) (“sed ex solo Nature natiq̃ue geniali osculo fuerat deriuata, cum Ylem formarum speculum mendicantem eternalis salutauit Ydea, eam Iconie interpretis interuentu uicario osculata” [Häring, *De planctu*, 877, 94–97]).
132. “Narcisus etiam, *sui umbra alterum mentita Narcisum, umbratiliter odumbratus*, seipsum credens esse se alterum, de se sibi amoris incurrit periculum” (Häring, *De planctu*, 835, 76–78).
133. Frederick M. Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

134. “Multi etiam alii iuuenes, mei gracia pulcritudinis honore uestiti, siti debriati pecunie, suos Veneris malleos in incudum transtulerunt officia” (Häring, *De planctu*, 835, 78–80).
135. “Quoniam similia cum dissimilium aspernatione similium sociali habitudine gratulantur, in te uelut in speculo Nature resultante similitudine inueniendo me alteram . . .” (Häring, *De planctu*, 871, 189–191).
136. On the question of excommunication, see Scanlon, “Unspeakable,” p. 236–242. Citing Elizabeth Vodola (*Excommunication in the Middle Ages* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986]), he notes that the Second Lateran Council of 1139 instituted a new form of excommunication which took effect immediately upon commission. Though this was primarily a move to combat heresy, the link between heresy and sodomy was well established, and Alain might have been thinking along these lines when he instituted the figure of Genius to deliver his anathema. Death was not yet a usual sentence for heresy in Alain’s day but that was soon to change. Thomas Aquinas advocates that next step in the *Summa Theologica*: “As for the heretics themselves they have committed a sin that deserves not only excommunication by the Church but their removal from the world by death” (Question 11.3 in Sigmund, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 63).
137. Jordan (*Invention*, p. 76) is citing Macrobius’ definition of *insomnium* from the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.
138. Wetherbee, “Implications,” p. 55.
139. “Quamuis Tindaridi uultus famuletur, Adonis / Narcisique decor uictus adoret eam, / Spernitur ipsa tamen, quamuis decor ipse peroret / Et forme deitas disputet esse deam / Qua Iouis in dextra fulmen langueret, et omnis / Phebi cessaret ocia neruus agens: / Qua liber fieret seruus propriumque pudorem / Venderet Ypolitus, hujus amore fruens” (Häring, *De planctu*, 807, 35–42).
140. “Vt dum sic moriar, in me defunctus, in illa / Felici uita perfruar alter ego” (Häring, *De planctu*, 808, 49–50).
141. Žižek, *Plague*, p. 21.
142. “Yet the man who sells his sex for love of gain makes a miserable return to Nature for her gift to him. Men like these, who refuse Genius his tithes and rites, deserve to be excommunicated from the temple of Genius” (Sed male Nature munus pro munere donat / Cum sexum lucri uendit amore suum. / A Genii templo tales anathema merentur / Qui Genio decimas, et sua iura negant [Häring, *De planctu*, 808, 57–60]).

“Many other youths, too, clothed by my favor in grace and beauty, intoxicated with thirst for money, converted Venus’s hammers to the functions of anvils (136).” (See n. 74 for Latin text.)
143. “Illic arte sua vitam pictura secundam / Donat eis, quos castus amor, concordia simplex, / Pura fides, vera pietas conjunxit, et unum / Esse duos fecit, purgati foedus amoris. / Nam David et Jonathas ibi sunt duo, sunt tamen unum: / Cum sunt diversi, non sunt duo mente, sed unus. / Dimidiant animas, sibi se partitur uterque, / Ut sibi Pirithous se reddat, redditus orbi, / Theseus infermi loca, monstra, pericula tentat, / vivere posse negat in se, nisi vivat in illo. / Tydeus arma

rapit, ut regnet Tydeus alter: / In Polynice suo pugnat, seseque secundum / Dum regnare cupit, sibi poscere regna videtur. / Alter in Euryalo comparet Nisus, et alter / Euryalus viget in Niso: sic alter utrumque / Reddit, et ex uno comitum pensatur uterque. / Atrides furit in furiis, ejusque furorem / Indicat esse suum Pylades, patiturque Megaeram, / Ne patiatur idem Pylades suss alter et idem" (*PL* 210, 338: col. 502).

It is interesting to note that Leoninus, in a poem which Bruce Holsinger – and I – consider homoerotic, cites a very similar list of Ovidian male couples in a poem written within a couple of decades of the *De planctu*: "No more did Nisus clasp Euryalus, / nor Theseus his Pirithous, no more / Pylades his Orestes, than I you, / my other part and self, within my breast" (Non magis Eurialum Nisus, Phoeus Horestem, / non plus Pirithous Theseus ipse suum, / quam te complector ego pectore, fide sodalis: altera nempe mei pars es et alter ego [Holsinger and Townsend, "Ovidian Homoerotics," 416: 53–56]).

144. Bersani, *Homos*, pp. 39, 59.

145. "Haec pictura suis loquitur mysteria signis, / Nec res ipsa magis nec lingua fidelis unquam / Talia depingit, talique sophismate visum / Decipiens oculis, rerum concludit in umbra, / Queis praeco solet esse boni pacisque figura" (*PL* 210, 338: col. 502). The last words are, of course, the description Alain gives of God as artist: "the skilled artisan of a stupendous work of art" (Sheridan, *Plaint*, p. 144).

CONCLUSION

1. Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 15.
2. Holsinger and Townsend, "Ovidian Homoerotics," p. 393.
3. Carolyn Dinshaw, "Chaucer's Queer Touches, A Queer Touches Chaucer," *Exemplaria* 7, 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 75–92.

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